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Acknowledgments

A few years ago, word was that you could practically guarantee publication in *Patterns* if you had a story or essay about one of two topics: coming-of-age or abuse. That wasn't strictly true, of course, but the underlying complaint - that the judges in the English Department had a pretty narrow idea of literature - caught our attention.

So we got out of the judging business and instead began inviting writers - published, successful writers - to judge *Patterns* entries. It's been a big hit. *Patterns* now reflects a wider range of interests, and while it's always been a wonderful magazine, now it's wonderfully different.

Congratulations are in order for the writers and artists whose works were chosen by this year's judges. Our judges are accomplished writers, all of them, whose works have appeared in both local and national publications. We wish to thank them for taking the time to help us further the aspirations of those published in *Patterns*.

KEITH TAYLOR has been published in the nationally recognized *Story* magazine, and has several poetry collections to his credit as well. One of those, *Life Science*, will be taught in next year's creative writing class here at St. Clair County Community College. Mr. Taylor is no stranger to campus, having read here twice, most recently as the featured poet during the Michigan College English Association Conference in the fall of '98.

PAMELA GEMIN is no stranger to our campus, either, as she is an SC4 alumna whose works have appeared twice in *Patterns*. Her most recent effort, the beautiful "To the Doe Last Seen," graced the pages of last year's anniversary issue. Ms. Gemin, who now lives in Wisconsin, also has a collection of poems set to come out this spring, and her background as a successful poet and former SC4 student is encouraging to all writers whose work appears in the pages of *Patterns*.

We also wish to thank SYLVIA BARGIEL for her time and expertise in judging this year's edition. Ms. Bargiel has been published in *Sparrow Grass*; two of her poems also appear in the first edition of *Contemporary Muse*. In addition, she has done readings at Barnes and Noble and at the Oakland Community College Writer's Conference.

SUSANNA DEFEVER, too, is a poet whose works have appeared in a variety of literary magazines. She may be best known, however, for her work as an "occasional poet" - that is, a poet who composes works for particular people or particular situations. Her gentle yet powerful Christmas poems have been an annual event at the College, and her most recent piece, "The Glassblower," a tribute to former Dean Patrick Bourke, appeared as the frontispiece to last year's edition of *Patterns*.

We wish to thank all of these people, who have helped to open *Patterns* up to new ideas and new interest. It is a better magazine for their efforts.

Poetry

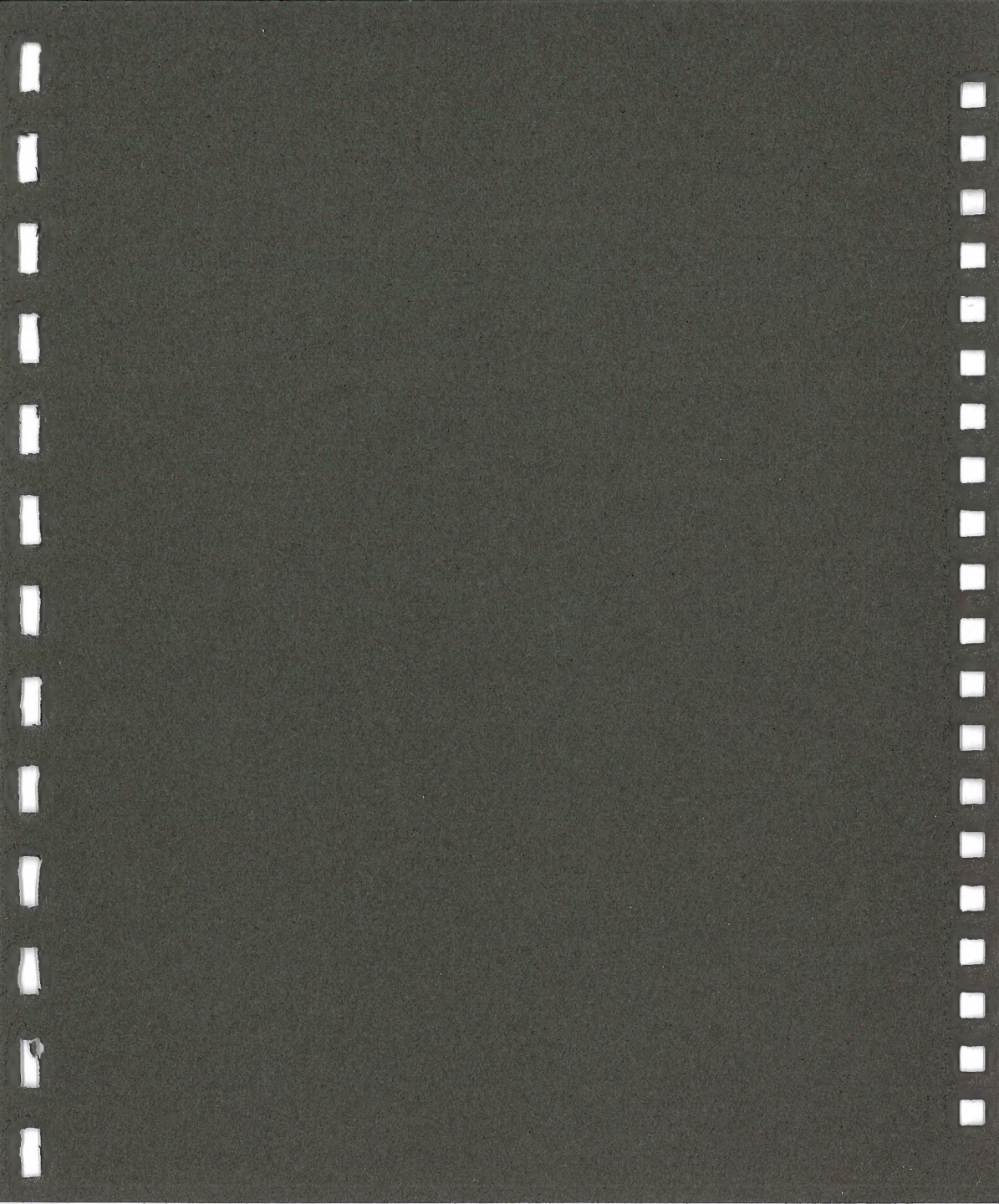
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Blanche Redman Poetry Award

This year's Blanche Redman Poetry Award, which honors originality of structure, rhythm, tone, and imagery, is shared by Rachelle Davis and Amanda Cutler. Davis's "Drowning" and Cutler's "A Loud, Haunting Quiet" share all these features as well as a common thematic concern: distances. In "A Loud, Haunting Quiet" it is an emotional distance between a mother and daughter; in "Drowning" it is a distance between then and now, between hope and reality.

These distances and their resolutions (or lack of) are expressed in lines that reveal sudden and surprising images. In "A Loud, Haunting Quiet" one character is "Awaiting the return of her voice/ Which has been squeezed between the hippie shirts/ For safekeeping". In "Drowning" Davis creates a devastating image of a former homecoming queen after "Thirty years of drinking / the prom dress hanging in the closet / moth balls and saran wrap / Queen's crown tucked silently / beneath the floor in a Macy's hat box."

These lines, from this year's award-winning poems, demonstrate those qualities so valued by the teacher and poet, Blanche Redman.



1st Place Tie

Amanda
Renaë
Cuttler

Seems she came
Out of the womb
Screaming
And didn't stop
For the eighteen years I had her.

She would spend
Whole paychecks on me at Christmas
So I could have the pretty things
I didn't buy for myself -
Haircuts and manicures
Bubble bath and
That crafty country cottage décor
That I know horrifies her.
Going without
The silver frog ring with moveable legs
She'd been craving since last June.
And when I tried to thank her,
She just sniffed and said,
"It's no big deal."

For sixteen of those years,
She took steps beside him
Walking with him
Down her hallowed high school halls
Ignoring the stares
And pretending to not hear
When the teachers whispered,
"He should be
with his own kind."

A Loud, Haunting Quiet

She pounded out songs on the piano
With determined hands.
She worked diligently -
Practicing, practicing, practicing -
Until
I feared the piano would collapse from
exhaustion.
But it stands silent now -
Resting.

Her airy hippie shirts
Have all moved south of here
Packed tightly into cardboard boxes
Labeled plastic spoons.

The familiar sounds of Tori Amos,
Crying out with voice and hands,
No longer dash from her room.
Tori lords quietly
Awaiting the return of her voice
Which has been squeezed between the hippie
shirts
For safekeeping.

The stillness,
A surface oasis,
Is louder than yesterday -
Crowding my thoughts with
Regret, still pictures,
And hope that she may have heard my quiet
voice
Just once
Through her screams.

1st Place Tie

Rachelle
Davis

Drowning

Can you feel yourself drowning?
salt seeping, stinging strangling
dripping past locks graying
senile eyes blinking, blurring
looking at youth, the gym decorated in
ribbons and bows. Prom
The crown resting, sparkling, empower-
ing
Homecoming Queen. The awe, envy,
hatred.
Tide is coming in.
2 Marriage: billowing skirts, pleats, silk,
taffeta
velvet slippers, diamond broaches,
roses, hyacinths
She was the Hyacinth Girl
marrying a hollow man.
Salt and brine in nostrils;
children dancing near the Christmas
tree,
the Christmas tree in the waste land.
But the hyacinth girl found water in
the rock
for her children and her man.
She drank and drank,
hatred and jealousy
building against the dam -
then broke.

Thirty years of drinking,
the prom dress hanging in the closet,
moth balls and saran wrap.
Queen's crown tucked silently
beneath the floor in a Macy's hat box.
They all drank
till the well ran dry,
till the rock went dry.
The hollow man had died
much like all the men he represented.
The Hyacinth girl is drowning,
salt seeping, stinging, strangling.
Brine clinging to the hair once worn
beneath the Homecoming Queen's
crown.

Ref: T.S. Eliot

2nd Place Tie

Robin
Cash-Larsen

Obsession

Department store time travel.
A retro trip from the fragrance counter.
Woody earth - cloves with an insinuation of musk.
It was what he wore when he wore nothing else.
Glass bottle uncapped, I transcend the fluorescence.
Edgy and over the top, like our fixated cravings.
As association of scent and sex so intense -
hours after he left - he remained.
His scented sweat infused with mine,
dried and lingering;

a kinky secret.

Exquisite sadist he left like he loved;
a painful good -(?)-bye over the phone.
I choked on the bitter pill forced down my throat;
that cup of Jim-Jones-Kool-Aid that killed "us".

He felt odd he explained, too involved -
Is there such a thing?
"A break," he said.

A break?

My heart into a million frozen filaments;
strung out in the abyss of rejection.
I poured out my grief behind frosted, glass doors.
Broken on the floor under hot, torrential flows,
I washed him off me, scrubbing away the smell of him.
Lost in the steam I cried and retched, hoping for dissolution.
Liquefied, emptied and small the pieces of me that loved him
sucked down with the drain sludge and slime.

2nd Place Tie

*Amanda
Rena
Cutler*

Sundays

You held my shaking hand
When I had to sing at that
Wedding. And let me go
Only to let me
to the stage.

In a half-awakened state I
Showered, and your hands
Leaped under the curtain to
My ankles as I screamed
And you laughed, saying, "Baby,
It's only me."

And you said
It wouldn't be a Sunday
Without me.

But then it slipped,
Shattered - like a Corelle
Plate on a ceramic floor.

And in the morning, not expecting
Scattered shards
Still pierce my bare
Callused feet.

I remember when
You traced my hairline
So softly
With your words,
And when I asked what you were
doing,
You replied,
"I'm doing what you want me to do."

You told me when I'm ready - only
Whisper "Yes," and you'd know.

In the basement,
On a tattered couch, covered
By a retro corduroy and velvet quilt, we
Sat and I leaned and whispered,
"Yes."

Selection of Merit

Linda
Mountz

Walking to the car,
handing you the keys.
Trying to stay calm, think positive,
feel your excitement.

I see
a three-year old,
smiling at me.
Kneeling on the drivers seat,
pudgy hands grasping the steering
wheel,
eyes peering through the windshield.
Red, blue, yellow plastic car keys in
hand.
Asking me where I want to go today -

"McDonald's, K-Mart, Grandma's?
Where to?
Is your button locked? Seatbelt buckled?
Are you ready, Mommy?"

I smile, nod
Yes, I'm ready.

I see
a five-year old,
sitting on his bike,
no training wheels for this big boy.
Pedaling down the sidewalk,
looking back,
calling -

Always Ready

"Are you watching, are you looking?
Are you ready, Mommy?"

I smile, nod,
Yes, I'm ready.

The ages and wheels change.
Eight, ten, twelve,
fifteen years old.
Roller skates, scooter, skateboard,
moped, motorcycle. CAR.

The voice keeps calling,
changed, but the same -

"Did you see me spin, twist, stop on a
dime?
Will you watch, see me jump, take the
turn?
Are you watching, are you looking?
Mom, are you ready?"

Seeing you smile,
strong hands on the wheel.
I hear your voice asking -

"Button locked? Seatbelt buckled?
Mom, are you ready?"

I smile, nod,
Yes, I'm ready.

Selection of Merit

Renee
Schantz

Forcing the Way Out

6 At the breakfast table, she opened her heart to them. She thought that telling them would free her and although she knew there could be consequences, she wanted to feel free. She thought that when she explained to them that her decision was set strong like the young love they once must have felt for each other, that they would both understand why she did what she did. That they would both understand why she had to love like she did. She wanted them to accept her. Her freedom depended on it.

She kept going to them. Each morning as they sat around the table together, she would open her heart to them, telling them more, and more. She kept going to them and telling them what she felt and what she heard each day and why she had chosen to believe what she did - that all men *are* created equal and that love *can* conquer all.

And she asked her parents many questions. Why did she feel this way? What made her want the things she did? But their answers did not satisfy her. She did not like how she felt after telling them. She knew that freedom should not feel like the scrambled eggs that rose in her throat forcing their way out.

Her parents wanted her to know that they were young once. They wanted her to know that when she said her problems were bigger than she was - that they understood because they too were there once. So, they began to tell her what she needed to do. They could help her make the right decisions. They could help her make the ones she could not possibly make right on her own.

Then the eggs came up. They could not stay down any longer.

Selection of Merit

*Amanda Renae
Cutler*

*Late Night
Phone Call*

The phone
Rings, and the clock tells me
It's 3:45 - in my morning.
On the other end is a calm voice
Something about a hospital -
My aunt is speaking, so I hang
Up, and go to Mom's room to ask
What's going on?

She was sleeping and has
No idea,
But I tell her...
Hospital
Aunt Colleen.
I finally realize I
Hung up on her.

Mom calls and I
Hear oh my God
And
When?
And now she is pulling on her clothes
and
I can't breathe as I ask what's wrong.
And I hear
Grandma, chest pains, hospital,
And before she gets to "chest pains," I
say,
I'm going with you.

And all I can think is
I promised her I'd visit and
I can't find a hat.
Where is that damn hat?
Daddy has so many.
And I can't find one anywhere.

Selection of Merit

Mathematics

*Amy
Mino*

It might as well be Chinese
This book full of math telling me
To add x squared of those to x cubed of these

Seven times the quotient of
Two plus two times the numbers above
Equals a state of mathematical confusion concentrate.

Selection of Merit

*Francine
Zander*

*Place of
Comfort*

The thoughts of love float sweetly through my mind,
Like the scent of gardenias in a well-tended garden.
The paths are gentle and curving, occasionally
Sheltered by caring vines and canopies
Of longing, respect, and admiration.
Dusted with the colors of wonder,
Curiosity, and fascination.
The grasses sway softly, as the perfumed
Breeze blows sympathetically
Over the flowers' fragile petals,
While paying careful attention to their flexibility.
Pausing, the wind subsides before
blowing again; the two then
Begin the dance of the retreat/pursue tango.
And as that aromatic wind approaches me,
It caresses my face as it cools and comforts my soul.
Its softness kisses my lips, then rustles
My hair sending shivers throughout my body.

Selection of Merit

*Francine
Zander*

*Portrait of
Passion*

The vision of you is painted
on the canvas that was made
from the times we've shared.
The look in your eyes when you
see me for who I am
tells me how much you care.
When I am creating that look
on the canvas, I am copying
great wonder and excitement.
The brush uses long slow strokes
with gracious care.
The feelings expressed through
the motions of the hand and eyes.
The attention to detail is exquisite
and the expression intense;
as is the artist's passion for the subject.

Selection of Merit

*Brian W.
Thueme*

Storm

The sound of a storm, dark and furious,
Brings a chill to my heart.
The sight of the clouds, shadowy and
mysterious.
Tearing me apart.

The rain bleeding on my forehead.
Huddled masses, wet and cold.
People seeking shelter ahead.
Umbrellas they hold.

Lightning flashing before me.
My reflection in the window.
Light driving away the darkness around
me.
The ground shaking below.

The storm around me, dark and
mysterious.
The storm around me, dark and furious.

Selection of Merit

*Renee
Harris*

*The End
of August*

I look out
Confronted by
The beauty of the sun
Upon the trees
Their leaves already
Changing
Teasing the summer's green
Of the clouds
Like mountains sprawled
Across the sky framing
The scene below and
At this moment I
Realize
I hold no power
To capture the end of August

Selection of Merit

*Amanda Renae
Cutler*

*The Take
of the
Elephants*

My bed looks crowded and
Uncomfortable
Shoved between the closet and chair -
seeking
Perhaps a little privacy
From that window
That invites the neighbor's eyes.
My gold

 Fish is
Swimming towards floating.

There aren't enough hangers
To make up for the lost drawer space.
And anyway,
The sweaters, all
Huddled together,
Are drooping,
(not their usual selves)
On those metal hangers.
I'm thinking that
We have to do something for those
sweaters.

The soapstone elephants
Long for the days
When they looked down from their
throne-like shelves,
So high in comparison
To the makeshift, temporary
TV stand.

Selection of Merit

*Linda
Mountz*

*The Touch
of Your
Voice*

Scanning the stations,
searching;
seeking someone to fill midnight's
emptiness.
Suddenly,

Your voice embraces the air around me.
Traveling from
I don't know where.
Catching me off

guard.

Volume UP -
Listening harder.
Surrounded by your laugh,
the fingers of your voice
playing with my mind.
Hoping for a word,
a clue,
to tell me where you are.
Instead,

I hear a song we used to share.
Reminding me
of the day we said good-bye.
"We'll keep in touch,"
we both agreed.
BUT -
we kept

each missing

other.

As the song ends,
your voice again reaches out,
touching me,
in the middle of the night,
in the middle of memories.

Picking up the phone,
I wonder -
WILL YOU REMEMBER ME?
Or will I be
just

another
caller?

Your voice answers,
softening the midnight darkness,
bridging hundreds of miles.
Asking what song I'd like to hear.

Slipping out of my mouth,
your name is a question
(will you remember me?)

and then -

I hear your voice...feel your
voice...remembering mine.

Selection of Merit

*Francine
Zander*

Words

Thought about words
Took a few moments to speak.
While pausing breathlessly,
I felt weak.
One by one, I remember them all.
The look, the tone, and the gesture.
It's not hard to recall.
I told you of my heart, my soul, and my
desires,
It's not just a motion, a stupor, or a phase.
They burn inside me like everlasting fires,
They're not just words, a noun, a verb, or a
phrase.
They are all that I am.
All that I know.
All that I want you to know.
I remember the conversation,
All the words are true:
The jokes, the laughs, and the connotations.
I know they affected me, but, did they affect
you?
The words may be awkward,
And they may even seem strange.
But, all that I've ever said,
Will never change.

Essays

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Eleanor B.

Mathews

Writing Award

Versatile. Creative. Diligent. These words capture the spirit of the Eleanor Mathews Award, and they also describe this year's winner, Harriet McQuillan Horne. The Mathews Award has traditionally represented the Patterns writer who has been published in more than one genre (for Horne, it is the essay and short story), shown tremendous creativity and insight (read "The Chocolate-Colored Man," for starters), and been published over a period of time (usually in Patterns, but in Horne's case her perseverance is well-documented).

Most of Harriet Horne's work can be read on at least two levels. First, her work can be read and enjoyed for its gentle humor: "Sleeping Together" documents the travails of a husband and a wife sharing a bed, while "Turkey in July" chronicles the comical confusions of an elderly aunt. Yet, like much excellent writing, the humor also serves to deepen the serious concerns of those essays—negotiating the sticky territory of human relationships, in which loss seems always on the horizon.

Harriet Horne, this year's Mathews Award recipient, is well-deserving, for she is a dedicated writer who is not afraid to experiment, to linger, to make us laugh—and think.



1st Place Tie

Becki
Hartman

Permanent Wave

From the moment my cousin stepped through the door, I was transfixed. Gone were the limp, shabby strands that had inconspicuously hung from her head. Standing in the doorway, with the bright summer sun flooding in behind her, Dee Dee's new hairstyle was alive and glistening. Piles and piles of radiant curls rested softly on her shoulders, and wispy tendrils framed her face and gently brushed her eyelashes. As Dee bent down to remove her shoes, her newly formed curls leapt from her shoulder, swinging freely in the air. It was the most beautiful sight I had ever seen.

"Do you like my hair?" she asked, plopping down next to me. She gave her ring-

lets a push and off they went again, springing from her shoulders as if they were hopping on a trampoline. I stared, and raised my hand to my own closely cropped, scalp-hugging BOY haircut.

"Oh, sweetheart!" my mother squealed upon entering the room, "You look absolutely adorable. How precious!" She gave one of Dee Dee's spirals an admiring tug and giggled as it danced for a moment before swinging perfectly back into place.

"My mommy took me to Nicholas and David, and I got a permanent wave," she exclaimed, with another flip. "The haircutter said my hair has beautiful...tester."

"I think you mean texture, honey," my mother laughed. "She was right, though," she said, running her hand through Dee's soft crown, "it's gorgeous."

That was it. I reached out and grabbed a big, fat shiny loop of hair and yanked it with all my strength. My

tears fell as fast as Dee's as I raced to my room to stand before my mirror. Ugly, I thought as I scowled at the shorthaired girl glaring back at me. I gave my head a little toss. No bounce, no boing. The dark brown sprigs clung pathetically to my head. I hopped up and down a few times. My hair was the same as it had always been, too short, too straight, and too thick. I despised it. My mother kept all three of her girls' hair very short because it was "manageable." I didn't want manageable hair. I wanted long, swirling, feminine locks that gleamed and demanded attention.

"Becki," my mother yelled, thundering through my door, "get your ass out there and apologize to Dee Dee, RIGHT NOW! I can't believe you would act like such a brat. Are you jealous?" She grabbed my chin and forced me to look at her. I was seething. I looked straight into her disapproving eyes, and for the first time in my life, let my anger explode in her face.

"No", I roared. "I will not apologize, and I'm not getting my hair chopped short again! I'm getting a perm." Despite my rage, tears rolled down my cheeks and dripped off my upturned chin.

"We cannot afford to spend \$30.00 on a nine-year-old's hair. I'm sorry." She looked tired and stricken. Without another word, she left my room.

For the next two weeks, I moped around the house, sullen and depressed. I didn't talk, I didn't laugh, I barely ate. I was going to prove to my mother that life simply could not go on the way it was.

My little sisters tried everything to bring me out of my funk. They ensued a full force attack on our mother, surrendering their measly allowances and vowing to eat macaroni and cheese for the rest of their lives. My dad, who was usually very quiet about the "girlie" happenings in our household, even sat me down to have a little talk. Although I was touched by his efforts, the fact that hair was only dead matter did not sway my stubbornness.

One morning, my sisters burst into my room.

"Becki, guess what! Mom talked to Mrs. Redmond at the fence and Mrs. Redmond NEEDS to give you a perm." They were beaming. Rachel grabbed my hand and led me to the family room where my parents were talking quietly.

"Mommy, tell Bec what Mrs. Redmond said," Rachel directed as she hopped up and down.

I looked expectantly at my mom, with butterflies in my stomach.

"Well, Becca," she started, "it seems that Mrs. Redmond needs to give someone a perm for her final exam at the cosmetology school. She hasn't booked anyone yet and she said she'd be happy to perm your hair. It won't cost us anything. Your daddy and I were just discussing it."

"What do you need to talk about?" I asked. "If it's free,...It's okay...right?"

My dad smiled at me and pulled me up onto his lap.

"I don't see why not, baby," my father chuckled. "But, I still can't see how you got so worked up over hair. You'd be my sweetheart with short hair or curly hair or no hair at all."

I gave him a big hug and jumped down and ran over to my mom.

"Thank you, mommy." I squealed. "I'm sorry I was such a bad girl and I promise I won't ask for another thing." My little sisters seemed happy; I spent the rest of the day playing with them.

On the long-awaited morning of the perm, I woke with the same feeling I used to get on Christmas morning. Everything seemed full of the promise of good things to come. The night before, I had carefully laid out the clothes I

would wear for the grand occasion. While I was dressing I kept one ear toward the door, listening for my grandma's voice. My grandma was so glad that I would finally be talking again, that she asked my mother if she could take me to get my blessed perm.

"Good morning," my grandma chirped as she came in the door. "Where's my little glamour gal?" I darted to the door to greet her. I grabbed my shoes and jacket.

"Come on, Gram," I pleaded, "I'll put my shoes on in the car." I scrambled down the driveway and dove into her big, blue Pontiac. I was as excited as our dog was when he got to go for a ride. My little sister's stood at the front window, smiling and waving frantically. I beeped the horn, and my grandma came bustling down the driveway. Finally, I was on my way.

The school of cosmetology was a whirl of activity. Six rows of swivel chairs were filled with patrons receiving every kind of hair treatment imaginable. Blow dryers hummed, ladies chattered, and teachers strode up and down the aisles evaluating the accuracy and quality of their student's techniques. My grandma and I checked in with the receptionist.

"Judy Redmond to the front, Judy Redmond to the front," the receptionist called over the intercom.

Mrs. Redmond came bouncing around the corner and led us to her area. She advised me to hop into the shiny, vinyl swivel chair. My grandma was going to get to sit in the empty spot next to me. I

was so excited, I could hardly sit still. When Mrs. Redmond draped the cape over my shoulders, I felt as though my heart was going to pound right out of my chest. There were a million bottles and combs and chemicals spread out on the counter in front of me. After Mrs. Redmond pumped up the chair, I actually had to look down at my grandma. My feeling of superiority had already begun. A rainbow of curlers was laid out, each color a bit bigger than the one before it. I wondered which colors would be used to create my new ultra-feminine look.

When Mrs. Redmond snipped the top off of the perm solution my grandma buried her nose deep into her handkerchief. The fumes made my eyes water and my nose burn, but I breathed them in with as much anticipation and yearning as I had for my mother's home-baked pie. Mrs. Redmond worked quickly, reaching in front of me periodically to snatch up light, peach colored curlers. I whimpered a few times when she had to pull my hair a little too tight to fit it into the rods. I watched my head transform into a round, peach ball in the mirror. Mrs. Redmond had used only a few yellow curlers, which were even smaller than the peach, and they were mostly used for my bangs. At last, every stubby lock of hair was encased in a curler and smothered with the high potency gel.

"Headcheck," Mrs. Redmond yelled, waving her hand in the air, "Headcheck on 4."

An instructor came hurrying over and immediately began to poke at my plastic covered head with her gloved hands.

"Very nice," she said to Mrs. Redmond. "This little girl is going to be quite the little curly top." The teacher tugged at the rod, and ran her fingers down the sides of the neatly divided rows. "Just a little more solution in the front, Judy, and you should be all set." the woman scribbled something on her pad of paper and quickly walked away.

"Now, all we have to do is wait for the solution to take hold," Mrs. Redmond informed me.

"How come you only used two colors?" I asked.

"Well, honey, your hair was so short already, the peach

and yellow rollers were the only ones that would hold your hair," she answered. "But don't you worry about the colors, sweetie," she said. "You'll have so many little curls you won't know what to do."

I smiled brightly at her and turned to my grandma. She reached out with her free hand and gave my hand a quick squeeze.

"It's going to look lovely, darling," she gasped through her hankie, and gave me a watery wink.

After what seemed like an eternity, Mrs. Redmond dumped some more goop on my head and led me to a big sink. One by one, she removed the curlers from my head and threw them into a tub of bubbly water. I had to kneel on a chair in front of the sink and bend my head forward. As Mrs. Redmond rinsed my hair with the warm, relaxing water, I imagined her rinsing away my short, straight scraps of hair and flushing them straight down the sink. When no sign of solutions remained, she wrapped my head in a soft, fluffy white towel and rubbed vigorously for a moment. We returned to my grandma and area #4, but this time I crawled underneath the dome of the blow dryer. I no longer had the privilege of a mirror, so as the dryer buzzed in my ears, I closed my eyes and envisioned myself skipping rope with my cousin and my new bouncy curls.

At last, Mrs. Redmond raised the bubble off my head and turned off the blow dryer. She felt my hair, looked it over carefully and raised her hand in the air once again.

"Final headcheck on four," she called.

"Final headcheck on four!"

The same instructor came bustling down the aisle toward us. She began examining my hair and scribbling on her pad. She ran her fingers through my hair, and pinched the curls at the nape of my neck and gave them a little flick. I was in heaven. Someone was actually looking at MY curls.

"Okay, Judy," she said. "You left her under the dryer too long, her ends are burnt and her curls have no definition. I'm giving you a C because you did do well on the execution of proper techniques. The poor girl looks like a poodle," she exclaimed, before hurrying off.

Poodle, I thought. What about adorable, precious, or...what I was really hoping for...gorgeous. My hand flew to my head. All I could feel was fluff. I tried to grasp a distinct curl, but I couldn't. I jumped from the dryer and ran over to the mirror. I couldn't believe my eyes. I was stunned. Where were my playful, teasing tendrils? I didn't even have bangs. My hair wasn't springing from my shoulders, it was fizzing out from behind my ears in one big circular mass. My head looked like a dandelion skeleton waiting for someone to come and blow it out of its misery. My heart sank. My chin quivered. What had I done?

"How do you like it, sweetheart?" Mrs. Redmond's eyes locked with mine in the mirror. She raised her hand to the wild fuzzball that was now my "new look", and patted it lovingly. To my amazement, Mrs. Redmond's eyes were filling with tears. "I'm so sorry," she whispered. "I can tell you just hate it. I ruined your beautiful, carefree hair."

She had said my old hair was beautiful. I swallowed back my tears and turned to face her.

"I don't hate it," I said. "I think it's pretty. It's exactly what I expected. Thank you."

Mrs. Redmond sniffed and smiled down at me. "Really?..." she asked. "You really like it?" She wiped at her eyes with a Kleenex and patted my hair again.

"Yes, I really like it," I insisted, convincingly. "You did a great job."

1st Place Tie

Harriet
McQuillan
Horne

The Chocolate- Colored Man

As we stepped into the elevator already occupied by a tall, thin, elderly black man, I braced myself in anticipation. My precocious two-year-old was bound to react in his innocent curiosity and blurt out an embarrassing question or observation. I made eye contact with the man and smiled hesitantly. He nodded to acknowledge the silent greeting and turned his attention to the boy, whose wide-eyed, open-mouthed gaze had remained riveted to the stranger. When the interminable ride to the second floor actually ended, I breathed an internal sigh of relief. As we exited ahead of the man, it happened. "Mamá, how come that man is chocolate-colored?"

I wanted to run, or better yet, drop into an imaginary marble sink hole. Frozen to the floor and blocking the man's path, I managed to respond, "People come in different colors, son." The man pretended not to hear as he passed around us.

This occurred in 1972. Events such as the Watts and Detroit riots, enforced integration in the South, and the local school busing controversy had brought to the surface fears and distrust which had lain dormant in many of us suburbanites who prided ourselves in our open-mindedness - so long as the issues were not directly affecting us. Hateful epithets and violent threats were spewing from the mouths of white-sheeted clansmen and the radical, militant Black Panthers. We were living in a whirlwind of social unrest.

It was also a time of confusion. "Negro," a term which seemed to be more gentle, was no longer acceptable because of its degrading derivation. "Black" was the mandatory word. The anthem of hope, "We shall overcome," was overshadowed by the angry sign of a raised black fist proclaiming "black power." The time was far different from that of my childhood.

In 1941, I was five years old. We were at Sears Roebuck. My parents allowed me to choose any of the smaller dolls on a particular shelf. Fascinated, I chose the darkly-painted one with large brown eyes and black curly hair done up in tightly woven "pigtails." She wore a bright red dress with white polka dots and ribbons to match. My parents attempted to dissuade me, but I succeeded in obtaining my first choice. Later, my father would laughingly tell his friends about my fondness for the "nigger doll."

There were other terms in adult conversations - Chinks, Spics, Polacks, Hebes, Dagos and Redskins. I knew these words years before I was to encounter Asians, Hispanics, Poles, Jews, Italians and Native Americans. Movies provided the accepted stereotyped images of happy, groveling blacks, Indians whose major vocabulary consisted of grunts and variations of "Ugg," and nasal-toned Mexicans saying, "Si, Señor."

And, of course, there was the Amos and Andy radio program to round out my early education.

As a young teen, I enjoyed listening to the mellow voice of Nat King Cole and enjoyed the music of The Mills Brothers,

Paul Robeson, and the great, world-famous contralto, Marian Anderson, as well as other artists of the forties and fifties. However, I was not aware that these singers were obliged to enter the posh halls where they performed through kitchen doors and to stay in third-rate hotels. The lines in the North were drawn irregularly.

I met Mattie when I was fifteen. She was the first black person I would know personally. Mattie was a housekeeper and I was babysitter for a local congressman. She rose very early in the morning and traveled miles by bus across town to the end of the line which divided the city from our rural area. She would stand and wait, rain or shine, for her employer to pick her up for work. The children eagerly awaited her arrival every Wednesday. Mattie was fun to be with. Her laughter was contagious. She was one of the most patient people I have ever known, but Mattie would not accept any form of disrespect from the children. Often at the end of the day, Mattie would place her hands on her lower back and stretch her exhausted, taunt muscles. If the children had been good, she would prepare her specialty - the lightest, tastiest, melt-in-your-mouth potato puffs I have ever eaten! I admired Mattie. She possessed the self-respect and dignity of one who takes pride in work well done. My parents would have liked Mattie had they ever known her.

My early education also included certain perceptions about Jews. Occasionally, I would hear comments about the Jews being clever at bargaining -- the term "to Jew one down" referred to getting the lowest price.

High school and college summers, I was employed at a local Jewish country club as manager's office assistant. It afforded an opportunity to witness a beautiful orthodox wedding ceremony performed under a huppa, a symbol not only of the couple's union but also of their future home. The groom placed a cloth napkin around their shared wine goblet, set it on the floor, and crushed it beneath his foot to remind him, in his present happiness, of the destruction of the Temple. With that wedding and so many other experiences, I came to appreciate the faith of these

people as the root of my own Christian faith, and I realized their basic values and mine are the same.

The staff at the country club was an ethnic mix. John, the chef, was a native of Alexandria, Egypt. His all-white uniform, tall chef's hat, bushy white brows and mustache were a dark contrast to his tawny, leathery face and hands. John's English was halting and barely understandable, but he spoke six other languages and had worked in the world's finest hotels. Others were from Greece, France, Lebanon, Cuba, and Puerto Rico.

Mattie and the diverse, colorful people of the country club have remained a treasured memory. I would never again hear ethnic slurs or general statements about a people without it grating on my ears. I found myself challenging such statements. Unfortunately, it would be years before I

would encounter anyone other than American caucasians in the work place. In 1969 or 1970, all employees of the automotive engineering center where I was a secretary were called to a meeting to prepare us for the minority hiring which was about to occur.

Television of the sixties and seventies revealed the ugly face of racism. In our living rooms, we were confronted with images of flaming churches, police clubbings, and dog attacks upon unarmed marchers, the assassination of The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King and the killing of other civil rights leaders. My parents, as well as many of their friends, altered their attitudes and vocabulary.

So, there I was - a child of the forties raising a child in the seventies. How would I teach my children? In the distance? Would they see reconciliation and healing in their lifetime? The elevator incident was an unexpected reality for me as well as my son. All the safe, remote illustrated books, television programs, and ideas I could expound may not be so powerful as that first encounter. I thanked God my response was at least adequate for the moment. The lessons had already begun.

2

nd Place

Harriet
McQuillan
Horne

Sleeping Together

The term "sleeping together," in Hollywood and television productions, usually involves images of romantic trysts of passionate, love-making marathons, surrounded by an array of lighted candles. Honeymooners and newly married couples, in their love-struck state, believe that their present enthrallment will last forever. But, let me tell you about the long-term aspect of sleeping in the same bed together throughout the entire night - like television and Hollywood, it isn't. For one thing, they never show, after passion has ebbed and the couple are all cuddly and warm, who gets up to blow out the candles.

We have been sleeping together for thirty-one years. Neither of us wishes to change to single beds or separate rooms - we still like to know the other is close by. I don't remember when it began, but our bed has been a battleground over the

sheets and blankets for years. I am convinced he was a "blankie kid." "Blankie kids" never grow out of it - they just change their modus operandi. Our 28-year-old "blankie kid" still ferrets his way through the house in the early morning with his double-bed comforter securely wrapped around him. In my husband's case, I believe he was born already wrapped in a receiving blanket. He is the "co-coon" type. Throughout the night, he turns over and over, winding the sheets and blanket tightly around him like a fully-grown silk worm.

My first line of defense was to be sure, when making the bed, that my side had one and a half more feet of width so that, at the onset, I would have the leading edge. When he questioned the set-up, I pointed out that, otherwise, the covers hang below the bedspread and over the bed skirt on his side, which is visible from the opened door. He bought it.

When that did not work, I purchased two sets of queen-size bedding for our double bed which allows my side to hang clear to the floor. My explanation was it was a mistake, a sale item - no returns. When that queen-size caper failed, I considered making a huge hem for my side

and inserting through it a three-inch weighted pipe, but I concluded that if he did manage to pull it up and over to his side, I could suffer a possible concussion and bruises, which would be difficult to explain at the hospital.

I also imagined the use of cement blocks stored under the bed and pulled out each night to hold the covers down on to the floor. I would have to be sure to get in first from his side, but nighttime potty breaks would present a problem. Besides, in his final windups, he often succeeds in nudging me precariously close to my edge, and falling out onto the cement blocks could also be injurious to my flesh and bones.

My next strategy was taking an additional amount of the queen-size bedding and tucking the entire side, up to the top, under the mattress. This necessitated the bed being separated two feet away from the free-standing headboard to facilitate my entry from the top edge and allowing me to wiggle and scoot down under. Scooting was somewhat difficult, but squirming out was nearly impossible, especially when he is involved in his final twist and roll maneuver. Also, there was the danger of the headboard becoming unbalanced and falling forward onto our heads.

The body does develop its own defenses. I may have begun a new evolutionary process. One night, I was awakened by the unusual sound of his chuckling and tugging on the blanket. There was another chuckle, tug, and chuckle. I was too tired to ask then, but apparently,

at the slightest tug of sheet or blanket, I automatically clutch it with a death grip, bare my teeth, and snarl like a cornered raccoon.

Unfortunately, the evolution of feet appendages to accomplish a similar defense against bottom pull-out will not occur in this lifetime. One night, I awoke from a dream that my bare legs were dangling through a hole in the ice of our back yard fish pond. Actually, the blanket and the sheet were pulled up to my knees. Most times, the dream is that I am walking bare-footed in two feet of snow. When he succeeds in pulling out both the bottom and my side, the recurring dream is that I am a bare-footed Eskimo woman, walking in two feet of snow, whose parka is slit open and pulled away exposing my entire backside.

Another dilemma with bottom pullout is that sheet, blanket, and comforter are heaped up against the headboard creating a tangled, airless chamber which can suffocate. At first I thought I was experiencing a weird sort of hot flash because I was warm and sweating to my knees and cold from there to my toes. 9

The desire for revenge overcame me one night. Instead of getting up and re-making the bed as usual, I just threw the covers down as far as I could and, when he was well into the REM stage, worked my cold, bare feet inside and up both his pajama legs and fell to sleep as warm as toast. The next morning, he said, "I had the most awful dream last night. I was lying on an ice flow and my legs were submerged in freezing cold water."

Often, when I do get up and re-make the bed, he automatically flops over to my side, confiscates my pillow and either piles it on top of his or wraps his arms around it and cuddles it like an over-sized teddy bear. The most effective tactic is to grab the pillow upon exiting the bed and, upon re-entry, placing my cold feet in an appropriate area of his torso.

If the battle of the bedcovers wasn't enough, there is the occasional snoring. I say "occasional" because nightly occurrences would have taken togetherness over the cliff

a long time ago. He is a daytime cat-napper, so he is not usually so exhausted at bedtime, thus no snores. However, on those occasions he does snore, the only defense is to roll him over to his side, preferably facing away from me. Away from me because, if I am already awake from the snoring, his secondary mode, when shifted to his side, kicks in. On the outtake, he purses his lips and makes a "puffing," sound. There are various rhythms - puff poo, puff puff poo, poo poo puff - you get the idea. Whether in primary or secondary mode, if he is not in REM, I can use the remote control method, "Honey, could you please roll over - your snoring (or puffing) is keeping me awake."

"Heh, oh sure."

10

Mission accomplished. Sometimes the procedure has to be repeated.

He has another little quirk - leg and arm spasms. Sometimes, when we are all warm and cuddly just before REM mode, and his arm is around my waist or his leg is next to mine, the lovey-dovey limb will suddenly jerk as if his finger or toe were inserted into a 100-volt electrical outlet. Removal of the offending limb or one of the roll-over procedures usually works.

Young lovers think that I exaggerate - that it will never happen to them. I had an opportunity to take an informal survey last summer. Each year, our group of ten couples rents furnished cabins for five days. As we were the last to check out and leave, I was able to look into the other unit. Each cabin contained at least two double beds. Eight of the cabins had two beds that had been used. I rest my case.

Selection of Merit

Renee Ann
Lepien

A Friend Found

Jason, my brother, was just like any other brother: annoying. I remember one time when we were younger, I had finally talked him into letting me play baseball with him and his friends and it was my bat. Jason was about nine and I was six, so this was a big deal to me. He pitched to me and I swung as hard as I could, but I missed. He let me try again and I missed again. He said "Last time!" He pitched the ball and it hit me right in the eye. He did not even ask if I was okay, he just said, "You better not cry, you sissy." I ran off and would not talk to him the whole day.

As we grew up I saw less and less of my brother. Jason was either on a date or doing something with school, and I was running from dance to cheerleading. He would, however, tell on me if I was dating anyone, since I was so young. Jason moved into an apartment after he graduated. It wasn't for long, though, because he decided to move to Mississippi to live with our father. Our parents had divorced when we were young and our dad got transferred. So my brother left.

The next summer I went to visit, as I always had before, but this time to see both my dad and brother. I figured I wouldn't see much of Jason, but to my sur-

prise I did. The first day I was there my stepmother asked Jason to run to the store for her.

"Hey, Renee. Do you want to ride with me?"

"Sure," I said. I couldn't believe he wanted me to tag along. What were we going to talk about? I couldn't even remember the last time we had a real conversation. Jason and I climbed up in his truck and pulled out of the driveway.

"So how was your drive down here?"

"It was okay," I said, trying to think of something else to say. "Do you like it down here?"

"Yeah. It's a lot different down here. People aren't as snobby as they are in Michigan."

We pulled up to the store and walked in. I followed him until we got everything we needed and then we left. We continued our conversation about how different it was and then he said, "Do you want to hang out with me and my friends after supper?"

"Sure. That sounds fun."

After supper he took me to a bowling alley where he usually hangs out. It was a small, run down building, but as I walked in I noticed the owner was redoing the lanes. It was really dusty and there wasn't anyone bowling. There wasn't a drink bar or even vending machines, but there was a pool table. It was in a little room with about ten video games surrounding it. Jason introduced me to the owner, a pudgy old man everyone called Burkett. Burkett told me that he thought all Yankee women had big noses and were ugly, however he kept saying how cute I was and that I should find me a southern man to marry.

I followed Jason into the room where the pool table

was at and noticed two guys playing pool and two more spitting tobacco. I was the only girl there. I met them all and watched them shoot pool for awhile. After their game was over Jason taught me how to play and everyone else helped out too. Bobo, a typical redneck, and I started to play a real game.

Bobo shoots pool like the pros, so naturally I wanted to show off a little. It was my shot and I had checked the table out carefully. There was a hard combo shot by the side pocket that I decided to try. As I lined up my shot I said, "Watch this!" I pulled back my stick and knocked both balls in the side pocket. I looked around expecting them to say, "Nice shot." That didn't happen. Instead everyone started laughing at me and I couldn't figure out why until I turned around and looked at the table again. My face turned beet red when I noticed that I had forgotten to use the cue ball first. They must have thought I was an idiot. Everyone became silent and just stared at me. I felt like digging a hole. My brother got up, patted me on the back and said, "That's okay. Just finish the game." He turned and said, "Bobo, do you remember last week when you were playing against Michael Carter?"

"Yeah," he said. "Some chick came in and started watching. I was breaking and I missed the rack completely."

Michael broke in and said, "That girl ran out laughing so hard I thought she was going to pee her pants."

I was so relieved when they began

laughing at themselves and not at me. Bobo ran the table and we were both down to the eight ball. It was my shot and I had to bank it. I called the corner pocket near me and closed my eyes. I couldn't believe it; I won.

Later that night Jason came into my room and said, "You must be a natural born pool shark. I can't even beat Bobo."

"No, I'm sure it was just beginner's luck."

"Are you sure you haven't played pool with any of your boyfriends before?"

"No, he doesn't like pool."

"Oh, so you do have a boyfriend."

"Yeah, he's a really great guy. I'm sure even you would like him."

"As long as you're happy, I'm happy."

"Thanks for letting me hang out with you today."

"No problem. They seemed to like hanging out with a Yankee girl. They even invited us to go mud riding."

"They did? Do you mind if I go?"

"Of course not."

I was so excited. There were five trucks, including ours, going. Everyone got some beer and headed to the Shelby military base. When we got there we drove down some dirt red roads until we got to a clearing. We all got out and were surrounded by trees. Jason and I grabbed some beers and went to talk to everyone else. After quite a few beers we piled in the trucks and drove down the road to the mud hole. It had been so bumpy my head had hit the roof a couple of times and I had to throw a beer out the window so I wouldn't spill it. I was bouncing off the seat more than I was sitting. The other trucks went through the mud hole without so much trouble, but were covered in mud when they came out.

It was our turn, so Jason popped it into four wheel drive. We were almost out when the truck just died and rolled back to the middle of the hole. My brother tried over and over again but it was no use. We were stuck. He opened his door and got out. He was covered up to his hips with muddy water.

He walked around to my side and opened the door. I climbed over to the bed of the truck, walked to the end in hopes of finding dry land, but I was at least six feet away. Jason had met me at the back of the truck and carried me out of the water.

All of his friends were working on getting the truck out so we just had some beer and talked. Then I started to feel sick but I figured it would go away if I quit drinking. It didn't. I grabbed my brother and said, "I'm going to get sick."

He quickly led me into the woods where no one else could see and said, "It's okay."

I threw up more than I thought was humanly possible. He held my hair and rubbed my back. When I was finished he handed me some napkins and led me back to the group. They got the truck out and everyone started to either leave or sleep. Jason and I got out the sleeping bags and laid them in the bed of the truck. It was pretty cold out by now, but we both fell asleep right away.

The next day when we got home I had to finish packing for my trip back to Michigan. Jason came into my room and helped me carry my suitcases to the car. We talked about what a great time we had that week and I realized that I had just really met my brother. He gave me a hug and in a choked up voice said, "I love you."

At that moment I knew he felt the same way I did. Tears streamed down my face and I said, "I love you." We let go of each other and I drove off feeling the sadness in his eyes.

Selection of Merit
MASON
Fentie

Mama, If You Can Still Read- Read On!

Hardly a day passes that someone I know doesn't say to me, "How do you do it?" to which I reply, "I don't know; I just do it." What is this "It" I'm doing? That would be raising four boys ages eight down to one, going to college part-time to finish my R.N., working two to three days a month at the local hospital, parenting a four-year-old with developmental and communication delays, taking my four-year-old to therapy twice weekly, making sure my six-year-old is at ball hockey on Wednesdays, the eight year-old at the soccer field on Thursdays, being a "Pizza Mom" at the school, freelance writing in my free time, going to the gym three days a week and the list goes on and on. Yes, now it's apparent why I get The Question so often! I, of course, ask myself the same thing on a fairly regular basis: The Question, as I've come to think of it. The key is not being too uptight about things that don't matter, being able to differentiate between those and the things that do, and being just a touch on the nutty side in the first place. Let me explain.

First of all, it's true that a clean house is a very important part of raising chil-

dren. However, keeping a house spotless is a nearly impossible task when there are four very rambunctious and growing boys bouncing around. Throw a chocolate Labrador puppy into the mix, and you have a recipe for an honest-to-goodness showdown with dirt. Please understand that you can not grow potatoes on my floors or countertops, nor can you hope to sit on the couch without acquiring maybe one or two chocolate brown hairs on your white slacks. In this I find a comfortable balance. Picking up decorative couch pillows is an unending task, accompanied by Windexing the glasstop coffee table at least a total of three times. (Ah, foolish youth; what possessed us to get that blasted coffee table in the first place?) The Windex coffee table task quickly slides down the list of important tasks right to rock bottom!! Windexing three times a day is simply ridiculous, in my book. It's like beating your head up against a wall and hoping that each time the wall won't be as hard or your head won't hurt. I simply can't waste time on that. It doesn't make sense!! Sweeping and vacuuming dog hair makes sense. That is a necessity due to the fact that I have a one-year-old crumb hustler competing with the Lab for tidbits that have found their way to the floor. Nope. No potatoes can grow down there. I would've found the baby chewing on one if it were possible... such is my rationale!

Now I must admit that it's lovely to have a spotless kitchen, beautifully manicured flowerbeds, and children that look pristine and groomed. However, let's do a reality

check. The kitchen is the room that is lived in the most - at least in my house. I'm in there first thing in the morning, sloppin' the kids, throwing cereal into bowls at break-neck speed in order to get them fed and out the door. I'm in there after they're delivered wherever they're supposed to be, cleaning up after the sloppin'. Wait! It's now ten thirty! What's that I hear? Yes, it's the baby fussing for a snack!! Okay, that's fine. I'm already *in* the kitchen, cleaning up from breakfast. I almost made it, but no. It was not meant to be. Then we have a snack (note the "we") and start to shovel those crumbs into the garbage, when I realize that it's now time to run out the door to pick up my four-year-old from preschool. We get back and lo and behold; it's lunch time! I believe I'm understood on the topic, and it's not a really clean and spotless picture, is it? But, it's a well-fed household I run! Again, I have noted no vegetation taking root on the countertops either.

As for the flowerbeds, I keep hoping and dreaming that dandelions will suddenly be fashionable and long-blooming throughout the summer. So far, my dream is still indeed just that; a dream. It really doesn't seem that I should have a great deal of trouble keeping lovely flowerbeds. I mean, "You're home all day, aren't you?" is my favorite question from people. I am home a great deal, granted - but these people just don't seem to grasp the full gist of what it is that I deal with upon venturing outdoors into my own yard. Enter CoCo, the Labrador. Oh; and I didn't mention Fred, the Elkhound too. Yup. Doggie

landmines are abundant in our yard. It's a fact. So let's get a one-year-old baby and a four-year-old out into that yard with the strategically placed doggie mines - I'd swear that those dogs have had military training with the accuracy and diligence they exhibit in this department - and you have the recipe for disaster. Again, I keep hoping that dog poop will become fashionable and nutritious for toddlers - speaking of recipes - but somehow I just don't think it's about to happen. I can't picture Dr. Brazelton or Martha Stewart endorsing the canine morsels as a healthy snack for growing children or hors d'oeuvres any time soon - hence, my weed-ridden flowerbeds. Need I say more on this topic? I think not. I believe I've already said too much!

Speaking of flowerbeds and dirt... they all start their day looking very presentable, my boys. The little darlings! However, I believe that it lasts approximately .oh, let's say maybe ten minutes at the maximum? I'll give them the benefit of the doubt. My first approximation would've been *five*. I make sure that they brush their hair and even wet it if necessary for those a.m. spikes that appear, and vigorously apply their toothbrushes. I don't forget to remind them to wash their faces, and to match their socks and clothes. This is no small task - monumental, even - and they go out the door looking very handsome indeed. By the time I pick up my four-year-old from preschool, he looks as if he's been rolled through every available substance that could possibly stick. His overalls are covered in paints with sand "glued" to the patches of color, and are slipping down a shoulder. His hair resembles a porcupine's quills, and he somehow has managed to acquire blue teeth. I'm informed that the attempt at using markers on his pearly whites was not a success. To say the least, I think. He does come up with some pretty inventive ideas, I'll have to give him that. The baby has already graduated to his second outfit for the day, being that he decided to suck the Kool-Aid out of his sippie cup and spit it down the front of his beautiful grandma-outfit at snack time. It also seems that his eyelashes are glued into a unilash with peanut

butter, which refuses to budge! Shampooing with the jelly was a wonderful pas-time as well, and he exhibited a definite zest for this activity. It didn't do much for the baby-fine curls on his baby head, however. The others come home with grass-stained and filthy knees, (and of course a few more threads showing in that emerging hole or two) the remnants of their lunches smeared around their smiling faces. We won't even get into the hair topic here!! Such goes the day in the personal grooming department at the Fentie household. We haven't even discussed mother's appearance either! Let's just say sweatshirt, jeans, ponytail...you get the general idea, and it ain't about Vogue! I still marvel that in my earlier years I wouldn't even answer the door without full makeup on my face. Honestly! Now John Q. Public is lucky if I've brushed my teeth and remembered to zip my fly! Three out of seven days without major mishap isn't too bad, is it? I feel lucky if I've managed that ratio. Funny how our priorities change.

Appearances aside, if we manage to make it through the week without me forgetting where somebody is, I feel that it's been a successful passage of seven days. I have never forgotten one of my children. I have forgotten two!! I neglected to tell anyone to pick up my two school boys on a teacher-conference day when they were released from school exactly

two hours early. Luckily, my mother-in-law was home with my little fellows and the industrious youngsters walked to her house three blocks away. I was nearly brought to my knees with the shame. I couldn't believe that I had forgotten my babies! I was working at the hospital and it simply did not enter my mind. Talk about guilt! I still cringe at the memory. I was very fortunate that my Devin, now five, encouraged his big brother to hoof it. Otherwise, they may have been discovered napping, hanging from the monkey bars! That was a definite eye-opener for mother.

All in all, I do The Thing - raising these boys/working/going to college/going to therapy, etc. - and I do it well. I love my children and oh yeah! my husband too! We're a normal family with some extra needs. We make mistakes, but we get by. We love each other and we make it work. That's the main point I make when someone asks me The Question. It makes me wonder sometimes, what it is that my boys will remember the most about their childhood. What will they say when they're asked The Question: "How did your mom do it?" I hope that they simply reply that I baked homemade chocolate-chip cookies, or they loved the way that I read a big, thick book to them over a couple of weeks at bedtime. I hope it's that they were loved fully and completely. It may be that it's the memory of when I taught them to do laundry and cook so that they could take care of themselves with minimal difficulty. Whatever their answer, I know that they will thank me when they are men. They'll thank me for the fact that their white underwear doesn't turn pink in the wash, and that they have to eat a fraction of the TV dinners that their friends do. Those times will have to wait, though. It'll be at least another ten to twelve years, by my calculations. Until then, I guess I'll just have to work a little harder at keeping myself busy!

Selection of Merit

*Harriet
McQuillan
Horne*

Turkey in July

At 94, she is the youngest and only surviving child of a second-generation Irish Catholic family. There were ten other children, and she can recite all their names and birthdates in precise order. She lives in happier memories.

Her halo of white hair nearly blends with the pillow. There remain traces of the freckles that peppered her turned-up nose and plump cheeks. Her beautiful deep blue eyes are cloudy now. I asked if she could see me.

"Only shadows, dear. I forgot - who are you, again?"

I had already answered the question three times, and anticipated the repeated response. "Your brother Leigh's daughter, Harriet."

"Oh, yes - he was born February 3, 1897 - is he still alive?"

"No, he died in 1972 - twenty-six years ago."

"Oh." A look of sadness crossed her wrinkled face. "And Tom is gone too. He was such a good man and a great story-teller." Tom was her husband. Her eyes brightened as she slipped into a happier time, and for a moment, I caught a glimmer of her former personality.

As we drove away from the nursing home, I reminisced about earlier days with Aunt Elaine. She had possessed a great sense of fun and a snappy wit. I remembered the story my sister-in-law tells of their first encounter. Cindy was to meet her at the airport.

"You won't have any trouble spotting me at the gate, Aunt Elaine, I have long black hair nearly to my waist and I am eight months pregnant."

"You'll know me right away - I'm just like all the other aunts - short and stout, white hair, squinty eyes, and big boobs."

We cousins used to teasingly call her "our drinking aunt" after a two-week tour of Michigan with two of her

sisters, her daughter, Mary Jo, and I. There was a particularly tedious day of driving in pouring rain and getting lost in the wilderness. There were three different sets of directions from the three back-seat-driving aunts, each one holding a map in her lap. Dispositions were particularly testy by the time we approached a remote, unmarked crossroad.

"Turn right," ordered Aunt Lucille, who usually held her map upside down.

"No, go straight," commanded Aunt Mary, who, as owner of the car, presumed more authority.

Mary Jo suggested, "Let's go left and find a sign."

From the right rear seat, we were shocked to hear, "And maybe a store. Sure could use a bottle of scotch right now, (chuckle) - might be good if we all took a little."

I recalled when, shortly after a series of strokes had required her entry into the nursing home, we were conferring with the staff as to her prognosis and condition. Aunt Elaine seemed to be unaware there was a comment about the color of her cheeks.

"I know a couple of cheeks that get pretty darn rosy after sitting on the potty chair too long."

A few months after the nursing home visit, I telephoned Mary Jo and inquired about her mom.

"Oh, she's still going strong. For three weeks in July, she was busy preparing Thanksgiving dinner. She would fuss at me for not folding the napkins correctly and each day would have new instructions, 'About the stuffing - it shouldn't be dry, and do not use fresh bread or it will be gummy. Be sure you set the flatware correctly - you know how fussy your Aunt Effie is.' The head nurse caught me in the hall one day and asked if there was any way I could get her off the Thanksgiving. We're all getting ready for July 4! You know - sparklers, cherry bombs, parades, flags, red, white, and blue?"

"Oh -- well, why the hell didn't you tell me that before I put the turkey in the oven?"

Short Stories

Remembering The Way Home

1987, *W. C. Sullivan* Robin Cash Larsen

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Her Irresolute Life

2014, *W. C. Sullivan* Melissa M. Grosso

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The Bath

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A Lesson Learned

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A Mother's Love

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Escape At Days End

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Richard J. Colwell Award

Richard Colwell, long beloved English teacher (and he would tell you that term "beloved" is always applied the unusual, the quirky). He did know he'd "his own unique personality in many ways" (there was the injudicious coffee cup (was it ever washed?), and the story he told of how he received his name as a baby: "I was such a screaming little rascal" he would say). For the first three weeks, I was not expected to live as a result . . . my folks, upon finding me still alive, needed something to call me at home just in case I was around in a year or two."

His teaching methods could be unusual, too; he would assign poems along with his students, at a dinner table, in his house to talk of a room, and of the world. No roomier than that he would the unusual as if he created, and no wonder, then, it at Keith Cash Larsen's short story "Remembering the Way Home" should read as if it were Richard Colwell's. And, taking an imaginative leap, Cash Larsen creates a young narrator in a small southern town who must come to terms with family and separation. In doing so, she infuses her story with a kind of "realness" that can come only with imagination and a gift for dictating Colwell's queries, traits of which Richard Colwell was most appreciative.



1st Place

*Robin
Cash-Larsen*

Remembering the Way Home

I clearly remember how I stood in the hot morning sun breathing in the sticky, sweet air as my toes oozed into the mud along the creek bank. I watched the somber-faced adults fan themselves with church bulletins as the Reverend took my brother by the hand and led him into the creek. The white cotton gown the church ladies put on Davie billowed up around him making his head seem like it had been decapitated and gently placed on a soft cumulus cloud. Watching Davie's eyes roll around with that white gown billowed up around his neck appeared gruesome to me. With all the determination of a ten-year-old I decided right then and there that I was never going to be baptized. I squirmed and swatted a mosquito. I slapped my leg harder than I had to, enjoying the sound it made. Grams, the ancient matriarch of our family, gave me a threatening scowl.

With my restlessness temporarily squelched I began silently counting the blue cornflowers printed on my jumper. I had only gotten to eleven when I heard Mama gasp and saw her grab Grandpa's arm. The adults along the bank of the creek pointed and whispered. They moved close to the edge to get a better look. Davie

and Reverend Harris were slowly inching toward the creek bank. Peeking through a sea of adult trouser legs and skirts I watched the blanched face of my brother as a shiny black, five-foot cottonmouth swam right in front of him and the Reverend. The snake, intent on its purpose, continued up stream against the current of the old Kentucky creek. Reverend lifted Davie up the bank to Mama. The Reverend told Grandpa he could continue with the baptism after a spell, if the boy was up to it. Grandpa looked at Davie who had his face buried in the skirts of Mama and Grams. I watched the dirty water from Davie's wet gown drip greenish splotches on Mama's church shoes. She was oblivious. Mama stroked Davie's hair while Gram clucked her tongue and said, "praise Jesus" over and over again.

Grandpa and the Reverend were finally able to coax him back into the water. Mama's eyes got all teary when the Reverend Harris dunked Davie under the water. On the way home Davie sauntered ahead of all us kids bragging about how he hadn't really been scared. He said he was going to bring his slingshot down to the bridge tomorrow and wait for that black bastard snake to come back. I knew if Grams heard how he talked he'd be in the corner of the kitchen with a bar of lye soap stuffed in his mouth until she said he could drop it. We both knew I'd never tell.

I was one of the few girls allowed to trail along with him and his gang. This privilege was only because as the little sister I was put into his charge every day while Mama and Grams did the chores. Each morning during the summer we walked the railroad tracks that circled down our mountain into town. We carried lunches made by Mama and Grams for my uncles that worked the feed store. Deaton Bros. Feeds had been started by our great-great grandfather back in 1897 and it hadn't changed much in sixty-five years. The men stood on the porch passing the time and chewing tobacco.

We kids collected sparkling pieces of quartz crystal and fool's gold strewn along the tracks as we made our way down the mountain. Davie was very

selective; he only collected fool's gold. He'd brag about how he was going to be rich someday when the government ran out of real gold, then he'd sell his stash to Fort Knox and become a gazillionaire. We listened with rapt attention because everyone knew he did have the biggest stash. Every time Grams or Mama used a can of tinned goods, Davie would beg the can off her then fill it with his rocks. Then he would bury it in a secret location known only to him and Owen, one of the smelly bloodhounds that slept under our porch.

By the time we reached the store our pockets were bulging. Uncle Granville and Uncle Woodrow were sitting outside on crates discussing the weather with the other men. Imojean and I handed over the lunches. We'd sneak past the men and run into the store hoping to buy some candy from Uncle Samuel with our "gold." He would always sell us two licorice whips apiece.

Davie and the boys always spent time in the outhouse behind the store after delivering lunches. Once I peeked through a knothole in the wood and saw them looking at pictures of ladies in their underwear from the Sears and Roebuck catalog. There was also a faded picture of Betty Grable wearing a swimsuit and high heels pinned up on the wall. Grams called that outhouse the "den of iniquity" and told Davie and me to stay clear of it.

Before we headed back up the mountain to go home, Uncle Tyler would give us a couple half-rotted heads of cabbage to take with us. Halfway back home our friends would take the swinging bridge

back to their house on the neighboring ridge crossing over the creek. Before going home we would all sit in the center of the old rope and wood planked bridge and peel the leaves off the cabbages and drop them down in to the gorge. After a few minutes gigantic turtles would swim up to the surface of the tea colored water. The old gray centurions would seize a cabbage leaf then slip into the murky depths of the creek. Then we would lay on our stomachs and spit gobs of phlegm into the water trying to hit the turtles for points. Davie always won.

That's how it always was with Davie. Mama tells her women friends again and again how her Davie was walking at eight months and running by the time he was one. Ever since he was born he's been trying to get some place else and I've been right behind him. It was the wanderlust in him that made others like Mama and Grams try to hold on to him. One of the things that made him so attractive to others was that you never knew how long you'd have his attention. There was a fleeting quality to any time spent with Davie. You always got the feeling he was always waiting for something better to come along, then he'd be off before you even got to finish your thought. Grams and Mama both knew how it was with Davie. Knowing this they should have realized that he might not be a safe bet and that he shouldn't be counted on, but for whatever reason, it had the opposite effect. They expected great things from him; he was their big investment. He was to be their deliverance. Him turning out to be successful would be their reward for enduring hard times. He would legitimize their suffering. The others in the family took a distant second in the lives of Mama and Grams. We were all loved, but we knew who would get the biggest piece of pie at supper.

I spent the better portion of my childhood trying to outdo my brother. It seemed I never quite made it. He was always bigger, faster, funnier. I worshipped him and hated him. Each day was another chance to try and prove that I was as good as he was, to prove that I had value too.

My lucky break came in August, a year after Davie's creek baptism. He was fourteen and I was eleven. He had gotten himself another can and filled it with fool's gold. I was tagging along as usual and he told me that I was old enough to be his apprentice. When I asked what that meant he told me it was the helper person that learns how to do things from the expert. He told me to grab the little shovel Mama used in the garden and meet him under the porch.

Crawling on our bellies in the hot dusty earth under the porch, we began to inch our way under the house. Luckily we didn't have to maneuver around Owen or the other hounds as they had taken to sleeping on top of

the porch lately. My overalls were scooping dirt as I dragged myself along by my elbows. Fire ants bit my arms and legs, crawling up my pant legs and over my back. Davie didn't complain so I kept quiet too. Davie stopped when he reached one of the cinder block foundation columns that supported the house. He whispered for me to hurry up and dig. This was one of his treasure spots. I felt honored that he was letting me in on one of his secrets. My eyes had become accustomed to the dimness and I began digging while Davie watched me with his chin in his hands and the gold between us.

Rays of sunlight stole through tiny cracks in the corrugated tin around the base of the house. Particles of dust swirled in the light and multiplied as I dug. Trickle of sweat went down my back, burning the ant bites. Finally he started to help. He moved around the blocks to get into better digging position. That's when I heard it. A slow cold hiss that made the hair on my arms stand up. It wasn't a normal hiss, that thin whisper from a single snake. This sound filled our ears and froze us with terror. There in the dimness right in front of Davie was a nest of copperheads. The snakes writhed and coiled making it impossible to tell one from another.

Instinctively, I lay there fixed, not breathing or blinking. Davie's eyes had a wild look. I saw a tear trickle down his cheek as he slowly started to back away, or maybe it was sweat. Then he reached out to grab his can. He moved oh-so slowly, but that move cost him. He sensed his

mistake immediately and placed his hands in front of his face, dropping the can. Through the dust I watched the sienna colored snake rise up and strike Davie. He shrieked and I tried to but my voice stuck in my throat like an accidentally swallowed jawbreaker.

Mama and Grams heard his screams. Fighting their way past the barking dogs, they were under the house pulling Davie and me out by our ankles. Grams stood me up, asking me what happened over and over. I couldn't speak. I just remember feeling the dirt fall out of my overalls as she shook me furiously. I watched Mama struggling to run with my brother in her arms. He looked dead. I wanted to tell what happened but I couldn't seem to put words together in my head. They were as transient as the golden dust under the house. The harder I tried to grasp the phrases and speak them, the more elusive they became.

The rest of that day and the week that followed were a haze. I know now, from years of hearing the story retold that Grandpa hitched up our mule to the wagon and drove Davie into town where our uncles had the truck. Davie made it to the hospital and was there for five days. Luckily Grams guessed right when she figured it was the copperheads that got him, so he was given the right antidote.

He regained consciousness and was home before I regained my speech. The family figured my muteness was from shock and I would just get over it in time. "No need to waste money on a doctor cure when time will do the job," Grams said. Davie recovered, but his hand was never quite right after that. The surgeon called it nerve and tissue damage and told Grandpa to be thankful that Davie was alive.

Davie and I had an unspoken truce after the copperhead incident. I didn't try so hard to be better than him after that. We both healed and returned to school. That year I found my niche in the classroom. Privately, I was pleased that I got the best grades even though I knew Davie would be the lucky one who would be going to college.

The years flew by like they do when life starts getting good. Davie's old buddy Lloyd and I became an item and were married in August after I graduated from high school. I won an essay contest during my senior year and that helped me get my start writing for our local newspaper. Davie decided more school wasn't for him so he spent his time working in the mine at Kentucky Coal. When he wasn't working, he could be found sitting on an orange crate daydreaming and swapping stories with the men down at the feed store.

Grandpa died early summer right after I graduated from high school.

We had a family plot near the creek and that's where we put him. It was a sunny place with johnny jump-up violets and wild geraniums. After Davie returned with the uncles from burying Grandpa, he told the family that he'd been thinking and had made a decision about something important. He had quit the mine to go to Vietnam and fight. Grams and Mama were tearful, but I saw the pride in their faces as they listened to him say his piece: he had already enlisted.

I knew that Vietnam was not a typical war and that some were protesting. I didn't agree with him going. Women like

Grams and Mama approved. They were sturdy patriots like most people from the hills. They did what women like them do best, take care of everything while their men go off. Whether it's to war, to town, to another state to find work, or even to another woman, the men take their sweet southern time and wives wait at home. This was also the case for Davie. All he ever wanted to be was someplace else and now he had his chance.

Twenty years have come and gone since he left and fate returned him in a military issue pine box. The cemetery still looks the same. It's strange how these places never seem to change. It's as if they are caught in a time warp of perceived memories, frozen in time, exempt from the laws of nature. Bending over I brush the winter dead wood and leaves off his headstone. Under the leaf litter I see the johnny jump-up violets and wild geraniums are coming up, getting ready to bloom. Pulling my sweater around me and laying the memories of my brother and our childhood aside for another year, I follow the creek path home to my husband, my children, my life.

2nd Place Tie

Melissa M.
Grosso

Her Irresolute Life

Amy awoke to sun streaming through her bedroom window. "It's going to be a scorcher again today," she mumbled to herself. Shuffling down the hall and into the kitchen, she suddenly remembered that, once again, she had forgotten to call the local newspaper to order delivery for Sunday. She decided to start the coffee brewing, and by the time she returned from the closest country store with the paper, it would be ready to pour.

Peering into the living room, immaculate except for her husband's scattered beer cans from last night, she noticed that he was already watching one of those simulated wrestling shows that he seemed to enjoy. Amy didn't understand Dan's attraction to the violence, but then there weren't many things that Dan understood about her either. Just one of the mysteries of marriage, she mused, lending credence to the saying that opposites attract.

"I'm going to run down to the General Store to pick up the Sunday paper. Do you need anything?" Awaiting his answer, Amy steeled herself for his reply. His mood when he awoke in the morning always set the tone for the whole day.

"Don't tell me that you forgot to call and order delivery again! I can't believe

that you're willing to run up to the store just to grab a stupid paper. And what about my breakfast? How long am I supposed to wait until I eat?"

"I'll make it for you as soon as I get back." Sighing, Amy turned and quietly slipped out the door. Immediately, she felt the oppressive heat upon her and ruefully realized that the car would feel like an oven. As there was no air conditioning in the car, she opened all the windows and tried to appreciate the slight breeze caused from the acceleration of her vehicle as she first drove down her driveway and then the road.

As always, Amy carefully scanned the sides of the road as she drove, watching for any animal that might be tempted to cross at the wrong time. About one mile from her house, she noticed something in the middle of the road. As she neared the object, she saw that it was a large gray cat, predatorily hunched over, awaiting a victim. Leaving a large berth with her car around the cat, Amy checked her rearview mirror to make sure that the cat was all right. Strange, the cat hadn't moved at all as her car had passed, but then Amy didn't have much time to contemplate the why, as she pulled up to the store, she just figured that the cat must really be engrossed in its hunt.

Grabbing a paper, Amy handed the exact change to the proprietor. As she turned to leave the store, a sickening thought hit Amy: maybe the cat had really been hit by a car, but was obviously not dead, just stunned enough that it was unable to get itself off the road and now ran the risk of being hit by another car. The cars going down the country roads always went so fast because there was no posted speed limit. The poor thing wouldn't stand a chance.

Amy quickly got into her car and began to retrace her route. As she drove around the curve leading to the spot where she had seen the cat, she breathed a sigh of relief as she noticed that it was no longer there. Obviously her worst fear was wrong, and the cat really had been hunting. But what was that up ahead? On the side of the road, exiting from the tall weeds?

Walking as if drunk, dragging its right hind leg, was the large gray cat. Amy immediately slowed her car, stopping a short ways past the cat. Getting out of her car, Amy slowly walked over to the injured cat. As she got closer, she noticed that its eyes were full of dirt, and the foot on its hind leg was twisted at a 45-degree angle. Amy felt tears well up in her eyes. "You poor thing. What can I do to help you? Oh, you poor, poor thing. Do you live at the farmhouse over there?"

Amy felt that the best thing to do would be to drive over to the farmhouse and ask if the cat belonged to them. She contemplated putting it in the car. What would Dan say? The cat was so dirty, but it didn't appear to be bleeding. No, Amy decided, she would leave the cat right where it was, wandering on the side of the road, and hope no one else hit it while she was gone. Dan would be very angry with her if she allowed an animal in their vehicle. "I'll be right back. I promise. I'll find out who you belong to, and get you some help."

As Amy turned to walk back to her car, the cat pitifully attempted to walk toward her. As its eyes were encrusted with dirt, she realized that it was responding blindly to her soothing voice. Knowing this only made Amy feel worse, like she was abandoning it.

Quickly, Amy turned her car around and pulled into the farmhouse driveway. As she got out of her car, two large dogs came up to her, both barking. She could not let the dogs stop her from getting to the house, so Amy just decided to hope

that they were friendly, you know, that their bark was worse than their bite.

The grass was tall and unkempt, and Amy's shoes were soaked from dew by the time she got to the back porch, the dogs trailing behind. She carefully climbed the sagging porch stairs, and timidly knocked on the screen door. Inside, she could hear a deep male voice yell to the dogs to shut up. Encouraged that someone was home and could possibly help, Amy yelled "Hello!" through the screen. Waiting several long seconds brought no response, so Amy yelled again, this time a little louder. This only brought another shout from the room around the corner, "I'm on the can! Someone else see what's up!"

Amy could hear the argument escalating inside. "I'm only in my skivvies, and I ain't gettin' the door! You dogs better shut up!"

Amy realized that it was a lost cause. Even if the cat happened to be theirs, they did not appear to be the type of owners that would nurse it back to health, and would probably even consider that putting it out of its misery would only be a waste of a bullet. Amy dejectedly walked back to her car.

Not sure what to do, Amy backed out of the driveway and slowly drove to where she had left the cat. But the cat was gone. Amy realized that the cat probably conceived how badly it was injured and had crawled off to a cool place to either recover, or die. She consoled herself with the fact that cats are very resilient; wasn't there a saying about cats have 'nine lives'?

As long as the image of the cat wasn't right in front of her, Amy could believe that the cat would somehow survive. What else could she have done? The Humane Society wasn't open on Sunday, it took the Sheriff Department hours to respond to non-life threatening calls out in the country, and she absolutely couldn't take the cat home. Dan would never allow her to even keep it in the garage in a box.

Pulling back into her driveway, Amy kept remembering the faltering, swaying shuffle of the cat as it attempted to seek help. She felt powerless to help the injured animal. Unwilling to provoke Dan's anger, she nevertheless chastised herself for not being more assertive. Amy at once was hit by the realization that she was allowing herself, through her lifelong learned behavior, to be as helpless as the cat she so sympathized with. Was that how she appeared to others, as having no direction in life, vacillating about nearly everything for fear of making a decision of which Dan wouldn't approve? Just as the wounded cat wandered erratically, blindly, searching for assistance, Amy spent the day with no hope for tomorrow, no goals or dreams, trying only to find the smoothest course to get through another day without igniting Dan's temper. Amy didn't have a life with any direction or control;

she had an impotent life that was controlled by a domineering husband, with expressions of gratitude or praise infrequently and inadequately meted out by him.

Amy could smell the coffee as she opened the door. The television was as loud as ever, and Amy believed that she had slipped into the house unnoticed until she saw her husband's figure looming in the doorway.

"What took you so long? You know, I'd like my breakfast sometime this morning, like now, Amy. And I hope you didn't forget that we're going to my mother's house today. I told her we'd be there around noon."

Amy decided to tell Dan about the gray cat. While pulling together his eggs, bacon, and toast, she tried to explain exactly how she felt about the incident as it had unraveled. But any sympathy from him was just not forthcoming.

"You're lucky that you didn't make the mistake of bringing the cat here. That's the last thing we need, a cat dying in our garage. It will find someone to help it, and that someone won't be you."

"I'm worried about the heat today. The cat may very well eventually heal by itself, but it will die of dehydration if it doesn't get to any water. I still wish that

I just could have helped it somehow."

Amy handed Dan his breakfast plate, and began cleaning up the kitchen. So much for a relaxing cup of coffee while she read the paper. Sure enough, she had forgotten about going over to her mother-in-law's house, and now she would barely have enough time to quickly jump in the shower and get dressed before it was time to leave.

Thirty minutes later they were on the road. Apprehension filled her being as they began to progress towards the spot where she had seen the cat that morning. So far, so good. But suddenly, up ahead, was the now familiar sight of her cat, erratically attempting to walk along the side of the road, still seeking help, dragging almost its whole back end now. Head down and trying to avert her eyes, she nevertheless drew Dan's attention to the pitiful animal, hoping against hope that he would want to help, maybe come up with a solution to this problem.

"Don't you dare slow down. There's nothing you can do. It's probably only an old stray that no one's going to miss anyhow. Why get involved?"

Although Amy kept driving, something awoke inside her upon hearing the callousness of his reply. While she had always accepted his contemptuous treatment as it applied to her, she suddenly saw a very unflattering side to her husband in his response to the defenseless, mortally injured animal.

Resolutely, Amy made her life-altering decision, a decision she knew would be irrevocable. Stopping the vehicle, Amy turned the car around and headed back to the injured cat. She turned the ignition off, opened the trunk, and dumped Dan's empty beer cans out of the box in which they had been stored. Amid Dan's yelling and threats to divorce her, she reached down and very gently placed the gray cat in the box. Amy noticed a truck approaching, and with one deft movement, tossed Dan's car keys far into the waist-deep weeds of the field. As she began walking back towards her house with the pitiful cat carefully ensconced in the box, the truck that been approaching slowed and offered her a ride, having sized up the situation with one glance. Gratefully accepting the ride, Amy made her escape.

2nd Place Tie

*Harriet
McQuillan
Horne*

The Bath

As she wallowed in the luxury of submersion to her chin in the full tub of warm, bubbly, rose-scented water, she mentally erased the mirror image that repulsed her. It had been five weeks since her last full body-washing bath, and she was resolved to enjoy it completely, never again to take the routine for granted. She reflected on all the little things she had not really appreciated – fresh morning air, the warmth of the sun, the intricate designs and individual scents of her roses, lilies of the valley, and lilacs; the sweet taste and smell of a Granny Smith apple and its crisp, snapping sound when sliced...

She had taken grudging delight at the prospect of soaking away the sickening odor that lingered no matter how many sponge-washings and limited showers. She had eagerly scrubbed at the red, indelible radiation guide markers on her neck and chest and wished them gone then and there. But there would be no scrubbing away, ever, the horizontal scar which began at center, widened at the skin graft where her breast had been, and extended around to her side. The reddened, tender skin revealed traces of dried purple blood imbedded in seams left from the stitches. Every rib protruded from her emaciated torso. The cobalt had not only triggered frequent nausea, but with every swallow

of liquid or soft food, delivered the sensations of double-edged razor blades in her throat and a golf ball passing through her esophagus and stomach. The thick, oily kerosene-tasting anesthetic offered only slight, temporary relief. She had often preferred hunger to the agony of eating. It was bitterly ironic that her most attractive features – the reddish light brown hair, her fair and flawless skin and deep blue-green eyes – were characteristics of the rare one-in-three thousand persons who suffer such extreme reactions to radiation therapy. She picked up the bottle of shampoo, poured a lavish amount onto her head, and worked up a crown of foam.

She resumed thoughts of thanksgiving. How fortunate she was for Mary, the good friend who taught her to mentally and emotionally place herself and her fearful burden into His loving hands. She recalled so vividly the experience of emotional relief after having done so. She was thankful for the words overheard or read that came at crucial times. She remembered that, while waiting for further test results, fear had begun to take a grip on her heart. To distract herself, she randomly picked out a magazine which contained an interview with Rose Kennedy and scanned the article superficially. Her eyes were somehow directed to a passage wherein the questioner asked Rose her thoughts about the grief and tragedies she had experienced. Her reply was simple. It is not the tragic events that are so important, but rather, how we respond and cope. At the moment of reading those words, a resolve had grown within her – if this was to be her life's end, she would go out with courage. She did not want to be remembered any other way.

Her thankfulness turned to thoughts of her husband of less than three years. He brought a sense of fun and spontaneity to her life. Early in their friendship, the knowledge that she may not bear children had not deterred him, and his openness to adoption was gratifying. Their marriage had survived the stress and indignation of fertility studies and the prying questions and background checks of social workers, not to mention the insensitive comments and inquiries of friends and relatives. Until a few weeks ago, they had thoroughly enjoyed each other in companionship and love-making... A knot began to tighten in her stomach – the sight of her own body disgusted

her. How could he endure to look at it, to be attracted – to desire her? She knew a family was important to him, their adoption process was suspended – and now, this... She looked down at her wounded, disfigured torso. Grabbing the soap, she began to lather her body once more.

Her attention turned to the frothy water, and she focused on the individual bubbles floating around her. Rainbows seemed to swirl under their fragile, transparent domes until something caused them to burst and disappear. She hoped the image was not prophetic.

Her eyes moved to the dressing table. On it were the peach-scented body lotion and the long, very feminine, opaque nightgown. The fragrance of the lotion was his favorite, and the gown would hide her unsightliness. Tonight, as in nights of late, they would snuggle and kiss in the darkness until drifting off to sleep, lying together like nested spoons, his arms around her. She smiled in anticipation.

Minutes later, she placed her hands out onto the tub to raise herself. Her arms gave out. She lay back and swung her bent legs toward her in an attempt to rock her torso upward, but her back was too weak. She rolled over, folded her arms, scrunched up her knees, and tried to rise up using all four limbs, but it was no use.

She flopped over again with a huge splash and helpless as a fish tossed onto the bottom of a boat. "Not like this – please, God, not now!" All good thoughts vanished from her mind. A new darkness seemed to permeate her very soul. She whimpered, and finally began to sob the sobs she had withheld for weeks. She turned on the faucet and flipped the water out-take knob. The combined low rumble of incoming water and the swallowing action of the drain served to drown out the sound of her continuing purge.

Eventually, the water turned cold. She shivered and noted the subsequent tiny eruptions all over her. "Great! Red eyes and 'goose bumps' to complete the picture!" Half laughing, half crying, she switched off the faucet and stopped the out-take. She let go one last agonizing sob. There was a knock at the door. "Honey, are you all right?"

She took a deep breath, her air passage jerked in spasms both at the inhaling and exhaling. "I'm okay. Could you come back in a couple minutes?" "Sure thing."

"Oh, God, please, please help me!" She splashed the cold water onto her eyes, rinsed and fluffed her hair – at least she had not lost her hair. She dried her face, practiced a smile and braced herself for his return.

Her heart pounded at the knock of the door. The knot in her stomach suddenly reappeared – this time in her throat.

"I...need help getting out of the tub."

Her eyes fixed on his face as soon as he entered. His features switched from initial shock to no expression at all as he reached out to help her.

"I'm weaker than I thought," she said.

"You'll be strong again."

She continued to search for his reaction as he lifted her from the water and guided her out of the tub. His eyes were brimming with tears as he gently wrapped a towel around her, held her close, and kissed her softly. As they clung to each other, her pain and ugliness seemed to slip away. "I thought I was going to lose you," he whispered.

"Me, too."

*Melissa M.
Grosso*

A Lesson Learned

10 “And with the cutting of this ribbon, I hereby gift this new recreation center to the city of Pleasant Valley.” Grinning from ear-to-ear, Mayor Alfred Benedetti proudly raised the scissors and cut dramatically through the wide, red ribbon. As the ribbon gently fell to the ground, the rambunctious clapping and whistling of the encircling, surging crowd warmly embraced Mayor Benedetti. It seemed as if the whole town had come to the ribbon cutting ceremony, a much-ballyhooed celebration that everyone had been greatly anticipating. The new recreation center had been desperately needed for many years, as much to provide the town’s youth with a safe alternative to escape the boredom of the relatively small town as to furnish a meeting place for public meetings and get-togethers.

Alfred Benedetti had been mayor for the last 15 years, and in that time had provided funding for a new elementary school, a new library, the town pool, and now this spectacular recreation center. The townspeople considered themselves extremely lucky to have such a wonderful benefactor among them, one willing to do so much for their town. And although the townspeople were grateful, they weren’t fooled that Mayor Benedetti’s

motives were totally selfless; they all realized that by accepting these improvements to their community they were allowing themselves to give unspoken approval for several of the mayor’s pet projects that only increased the ledger balance in his personal bank accounts. Pet projects that would probably be considered corruption in other towns that did not receive at least part of the illegally and improperly gotten gains back in the form of facilities that considerably improved the lives of everyone. Besides, the ramifications of the mayor’s pet projects, which included inordinate personal gains from the allowance of toxic waste dumping, the clear-cutting of a section of the city’s surrounding countryside, and the opening of the gravel pit, among other things, would not create noticeable destruction to their town for years to come, if at all. Mayor Benedetti promised all that he would be careful, and any damage that occurred that was later proved to endanger lives would be quickly remedied. And in the meantime, jobs were created and the town prospered, and so everyone benefited.

The festivities lasted well into the evening. One of the last to leave was a family named Bracha. They lived out towards the countryside, and the boys raced ahead on their bikes, having a two-mile ride in front of them. As their parents, Harold and Olivia, slowly drove past their three sons, they admonished them to come directly home, as it was late and they were attending early Mass in the morning. “And make sure you all stay together,” their mother warned.

The oldest, Harry, yelled out to his brothers, “Bet we get home only a few minutes after Mom and Dad! C’mon! Don’t fall behind!”

But after only a short time, Petey, the youngest, was already lagging quite a distance behind his brothers. In fact, Harry and Robbie, the middle brother, stopped just short of the town hermit’s shack to wait for Petey to catch up. As they waited, they gazed over at the shack and noticed that a dim light was shining from one of the rooms inside of the run-down house.

Harry kicked dirt from the road and glanced back at Petey as he muttered, as much to himself as to Robbie, “Wonder what he ever does for fun?”

He hardly ever leaves that house, only to get groceries. Then he has to pull that old wagon behind him to get his stuff back home. Must be lonely. Guess I kind of feel sorry for him."

Robbie concurred. "Mom told me once that no one really bothers with him anymore since his wife died about twelve, thirteen years ago now. Just about the time we were born, huh? Mom said that he just shut himself off from everyone. I wonder if he has any other family?"

Petey finally caught up and stopped his bike alongside his brothers. "Thanks for waiting. Are you guys ready?"

"Yeah, come on," Harry answered. "Mom and Dad will be waiting."

But as they began pedaling their bikes, it was at a much slower pace than before, the moon above guiding their way. They were silent as they passed directly in front of the decrepit shack, each wondering to himself why a person would choose to live in those conditions, virtually cutting himself off from the world.

"I've seen kids from school that make fun of him when he does come to town. They follow him and say mean things to him," Harry began, shaking his head. "Other kids throw eggs at his house on Devil's Night, and last year they broke three of his windows. I remember that the mayor came out after a few days and had the windows replaced for him. I guess the hermit is lucky that someone sort of looks out for him."

Robbie nodded his agreement and asked, "Do either of you even know what his name is? They say he's lived in that

house all his life, and that his was one of the founding families of this town. Wonder what he would think of all the improvements Mayor Benedetti is giving to our town, you know if his family really was one of the founders? You would think that it would really make him happy."

"Yeah, well let's get home. I don't want to get in trouble for being late. C'mon guys," Petey piped in.

Over the next several months the townspeople saw less and less of the hermit, and when he did venture forth, he was met with the same derisive teasing from the town's children as before. Always though, he would trudge on, ignoring their taunts and going about his necessary business. He appeared particularly frail that fall, walking even more slowly than usual.

Harry noticed him one winter day, lugging his old wagon behind him. He felt that perhaps he should stop to help him, but didn't want to get teased by his classmates who were now running past the old man and yelling mean comments at him. The old man just kept walking, and after a time, he stopped and stood in front of the new recreation center. And he smiled. After a minute or two, he slowly turned and began walking home. Forgetting about the old man, Harry ran after his friends to catch up, as they were going over to the pool, which was turned into a hockey rink in the wintertime for the children of the town.

Over the next few weeks, no one saw the old man. Eventually, the mayor sent out a deputy to check on him. Harry was walking home the day the deputy was sent, and was very close to the old man's shack when the county ambulance went by. Running up to the shack out of curiosity, Harry saw the old man being wheeled out of the house, a blanket covering his head.

Glancing inside, he notices that the shack was immaculately clean. He saw that over the old man's credenza several prominent townspeople were whispering and dismally shaking their heads. Suddenly, Mayor Benedetti pulled into the driveway and hurried into the shack. But he had not gotten there quickly enough. Mr. Jones, the owner of the local grocery store, waved several pieces of paper at the Mayor and said with loathing, "You're finished."

For in Mr. Jones' hands were canceled checks made payable to Mayor Alfred Benedetti. Checks that had paid for the elementary school. The library. The pool. The new recreation center. And in the memo line of each check, which were drawn off the hermit's personal checking account, was written, "For the enjoyment of the children of Pleasant Valley. May God Bless."

Selection of Merit

*Melissa M.
Grosso*

A Mother's Love

12

"Mama, tell me again about when I was a baby," pleaded Ally. Her mother smiled, planning to treasure forever this picture of her daughter, who was at this very moment carefully wrapped in a fluffy pink quilt and lying with her favorite doll.

"All right, young miss. Now let's see if I can still remember," teased her mother.

"Oh, Mama. You know you remember. Tell me about the first time you saw me."

"You were so beautiful. I had waited nine long months to hold you in my arms, and I never wanted to put you down. You were so content and happy to let me hold you, and sing to you, and let me make funny faces at you! You were such a good baby. It seemed that you never cried. And when you learned how to crawl, you followed me everywhere! I had to be care-

ful not to step on you! Now you're getting to be such a big girl, sometimes I just don't know where all the time has gone."

Unconsciously shaking her head ever so slightly, she berated herself for all the years that she had allowed to slip by. There had always seemed to be so much to do, between her job and the housework, that more often than not she had just been too busy to spend much quality time with her daughter. It seemed like only yesterday that Ally was a baby. Sighing silently, she promised to herself, again, to spend more time with her daughter, before Ally grew up and the opportunity was gone forever. And this time she really meant it.

"Mama, will you read me a book? The book about the fish that looks like a rainbow. You know that's my favorite book. It's right there on my dresser, next to the ballerina."

"Sure, baby."

Returning with the book a moment later, her mother snuggled close to Ally and began to read. Ally followed with her finger the words her mother read, and studiously examined the picture on each page. When her mother had finished, Ally promptly asked her to read another book.

"All right. One more book. Then you have to go to sleep. Mama's got too many things that I have to get done tonight before I can go to bed."

Instantly remembering the promise that she had made to herself only

minutes earlier, she decided to do something special with Ally tomorrow.

"How about tomorrow we go to the park, okay?"

Ally nodded, blonde curls bouncing. "Can we have a picnic? But remember, I don't like to eat the crusts on my sandwich. I feed them to the squirrels. Okay?"

"All right. But you drive a hard bargain, young lady. Now, what book is it that you want me to read now?"

"Can you read two more books? I can't decide between the book about the cat that dresses up in costumes, or the gingerbread man book. Please Mama, just two more books?"

"Ally, I agreed to one more book. Now which one is it?"

"The gingerbread man book, I guess," Ally answered dejectedly.

As she walked over to Ally's bookshelf, her mother looked back over her shoulder and asked, "So what did you do in school today?"

"Nothing," Ally replied, shrugging her shoulders.

Her mother turned around and asked, "You mean to tell me that you sat at your desk all day, and just stared at the walls? You didn't do anything?"

Ally giggled at the thought. "No, Mama. I guess we did go out to recess, and we had lunch, too."

"Boy, school sure has gotten easier since I was a little girl. The teachers used to make us learn our letters and numbers, shapes and colors. I see that I must have a talk with your teacher and tell her to make sure that you work harder."

"No, Mama. We work hard. I promise. Will you read to me now?"

"All right. Just this one last book. You can turn the pages for me. Okay?"

Ally nodded her agreement and settled back against her mother, carefully turning the page when it was time to do so. When the book was over, Ally decided to try and keep her mother in her bedroom just a little longer.

"Mama, can we go to the park by the beach tomorrow? Not the one by the school. Okay? Mama, remember the last time we went to the beach, and the wind blew my beach ball way out in the lake? We watched it float away until the freighter got in the way. Who do you think ever found it?"

"I bet it ended up in Canada somewhere," answered her mother. "Probably some little boy or girl still plays with your beach ball every summer. I hope that they enjoy it as much as you did!"

"That's my favorite place to go with you, Mama. To the beach. I love jumping in the waves, and building sandcastles, and eating our picnic lunch. I wish we could go to the beach and the park more. Can we, Mama?"

Once again remembering her resolve to begin spending more time with her daughter - starting tomorrow - she nodded. She leaned over to kiss Ally good night, and pulled the comforter back up to Ally's chin.

Before turning out the light, she stood in Ally's doorway for a moment and gazed back over at her daughter. With her blonde, curly hair and blue eyes, she looked just like a little angel. She once again thought to herself that it was so hard to believe that Ally was getting so big. Ally meant more to her than anything, or anyone. With a heavy heart, she once again berated herself for all the times she had chosen work and other activities over her daughter. Those moments she missed with Ally she would never, ever get back. They were gone forever. All she could do was make the most of the future.

She turned out the light and began to walk away. From the darkness she heard Ally's sweet little voice. "Mama! I love you!"

Startled by the sound of a vehicle, Sharon looked up. She must have dozed off. Looking about her, aside from the sound of the passing vehicle, the setting was very serene, peaceful. Once again tending to her daughter, she carefully removed another leaf from the base of the moderately sized stone. Leaning forward she traced the deep etching, caressing the memorized words with her finger. Allison Marie. Age six. Beloved daughter. Until we meet again in Heaven.

Rising slowly, visiting hours almost over, Sharon whispered back, "I love you too, baby."

*Linda
Mountz*

Escape at Day's End

14 She rubbed at her eyes with hands that were wet from the dishwater and immediately regretted it. Now her eyes were also itchy, along with the burning comes from not enough sleep and too many things to do in one day. It was eight p.m. and she still had laundry to bring in, a floor to wash, bills to pay, a paper to finish for class the next day, and a nine-year-old waiting for some kind of bedtime story. She hoped Tyler would be happy telling stories tonight; her eyes were in no condition to read. She dried her hands and headed for Tyler's room.

He pounced on her as soon as she entered the room. "Mom, can we go for a bike ride tomorrow? You said we could this week, and we still haven't. Or maybe we could go for a walk, or to the park? You always like going to the park."

"Tyler, why don't we just concentrate on telling a short story for now. I'm completely, totally,..."

"And incredibly?"

"Yes, incredibly, tired. So let's do a quick story and then we'll talk about tomorrow."

Tyler thought for a moment and then started the story. "Once upon a time, a boy named Tyler, and his mom, were going for a walk. They were taking a short cut through a field they had never been through. His mom kept telling him to be careful where he was walking because she was in a hurry to get home and she didn't want him to fall or get lost. She must not have been paying attention herself, because she tripped and fell into this humongous hole. He could hear her yelling all the way down."

She could tell he was peeking at her, making sure she was still awake. Satisfied that her eyes were open, he continued the story. "The hole was so deep, she just kept falling and falling, until she was afraid there would be no end to it. Tyler knew she would be worried about him, so he jumped in after her. When they finally stopped falling, they realized they had landed right in the middle of a park."

"Wait a minute. Does this story have anything to do with going to the park tomorrow?" she interrupted.

"No, I wasn't thinking about that. I just know you like parks," said Tyler, before continuing the story. "Once Tyler and his mom started walking around, his mom wasn't so afraid anymore. She was surprised that there could be a park under the ground. There were trees, water fountains, and all kinds of flowers. There was some playground equipment a little ways into the park, so Tyler asked if they could stop for a few minutes to play. His mom wanted to take a break, too, so she sat on a swing while he climbed on the jungle-gym, went up and down the slide, and went round and round on the merry-go-round. While she was waiting for him, she started to swing, not a lot, just a little. Back and forth, back and forth. He thought about how much he liked it when she pushed him, so he went over and started to push her. Pretty soon, she was pumping with her legs, going higher and higher. He got on a swing next to her and tried to catch up with how high she was going. He

could hear her laughing every time they passed each other; when he was going forward, she was coming back. Tyler was having so much fun, he didn't notice it getting dark."

By now she had forgotten about the work she was supposed to finish. Tyler was working very hard on telling his story. She was surprised how he had changed it to include her. Most of the time she was just a background person in his stories. Once in a while, she would appear just in time to rescue him and his friends from whatever predicament they had gotten

themselves into. She realized it was nice to have the story be about her and something she liked.

She could tell Tyler was getting tired, so she suggested he finish the story. "After Tyler and his mom got tired of swinging, they looked for a place where they could spend the night. It was now very dark, and even though the park was still pretty, they knew they should rest so they could find their way back home the next day."

After several minutes of silence, she realized Tyler had fallen asleep. She struggled out of his bed, trying not to wake him. Even though she was still tired, she needed to at least make up her to-do list for the next day. After crossing out several things, and rearranging several others, she put, "Spend time with Tyler at the park" at the top of her list. Then she went to bed, remembering how it had felt swinging with him, in that make-believe park under the ground. She couldn't wait for tomorrow.



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Friends of the Arts is an organization of citizens of our community who are interested in supporting the arts and promoting programs in the arts at St. Clair County Community College in music, theatre, creative writing and the visual arts.

With the retirement of Dean Patrick Bourke, the Board of Directors of the *Friends of the Arts* was reorganized and expanded. With the recent passing of Dean Bourke, the co-chairmanship, which he shared with Nancy Nyitray, will once again change. The Secretary-treasurer, Geri Reed: ex-officio, Christa Adams. Other board members are: Sylvia Bargiel, Susanna Defever, David Korff, Al Matthews and Margaret Stone.

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*Darin
Magneson*

“M.M.”



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*Nicole
Bedy*

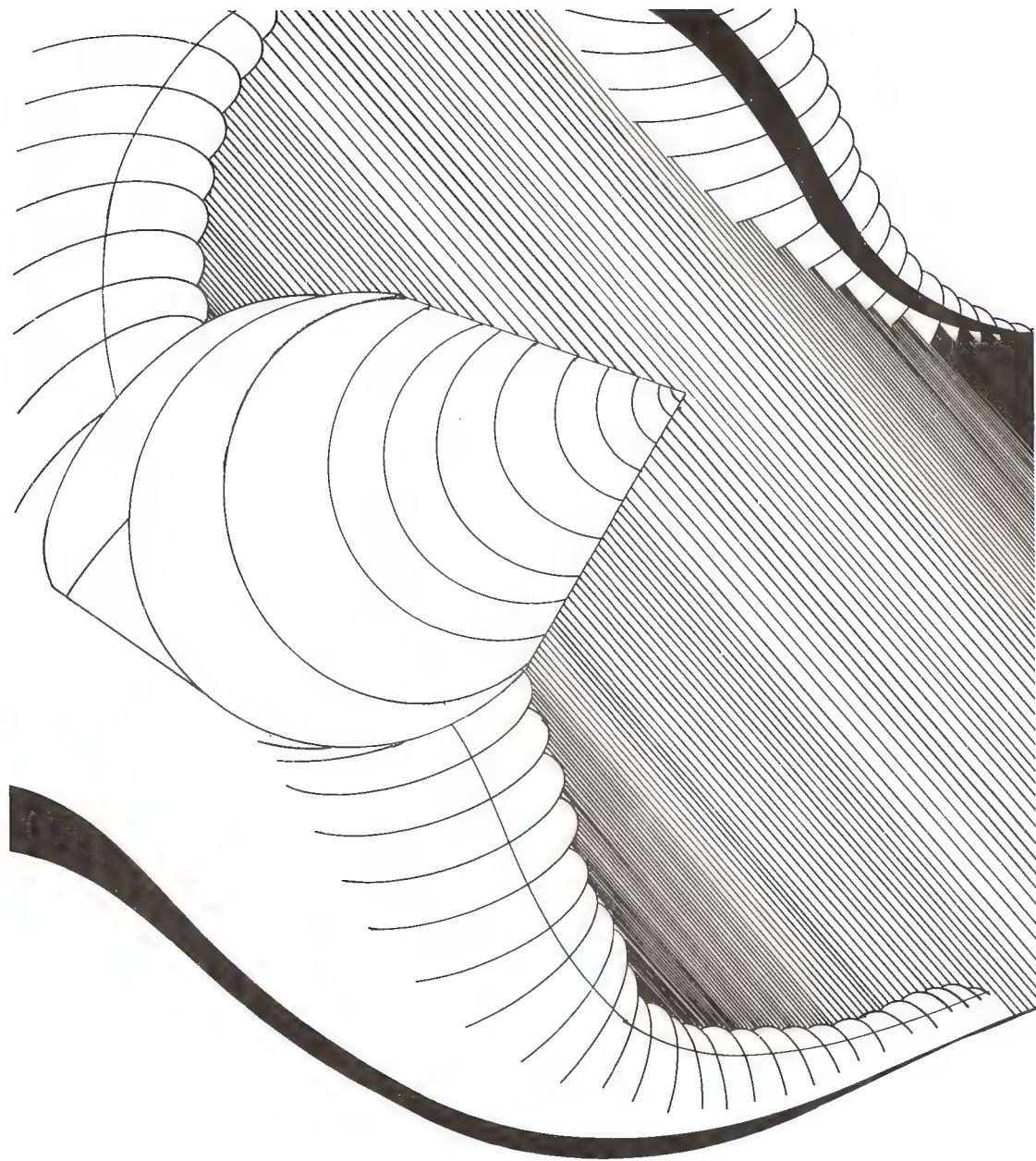
Painted Women I



3rd Place

*John L.
Ikera*

Geometric Shell



Selection of Merit

*Jennifer
Baecke*

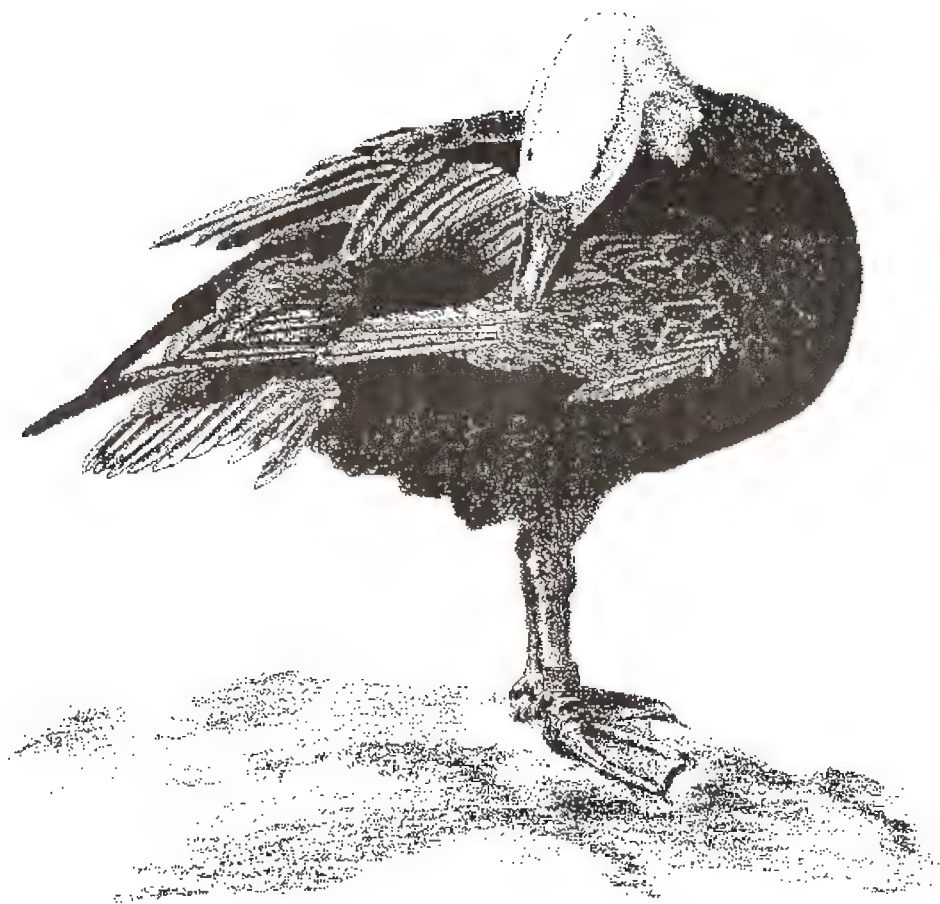
Jimi Hendrix



Selection of Merit

*Kathy
Block*

Goose



Selection of Merit

*Karen
Gorski*

Tribesman



Selection of Merit

*John L.
Iker*

Castle Security



Selection of Merit

*John L.
Ikera*

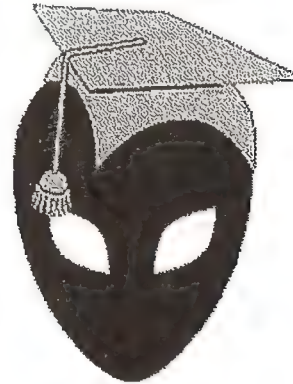
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Selection of Merit

*Jennifer
Kettle*

They're Here!



Selection of Merit

*Amanda
Jones*

Space Multiplication



Selection of Merit

*Darin
Magneson*

Bluewater



PORT HURON

Bluewater

Selection of Merit

*Darin
Magneson*

Launch



Selection of Merit

*Shannon
Peters*

Seeing Spots



Selection of Merit

*James J.
Pyle*

“Bass Man”



Selection of Merit

*Thomas L.
Pyrzewski*

Apartment #4



Selection of Merit

*Thomas L.
Pyrzewski*

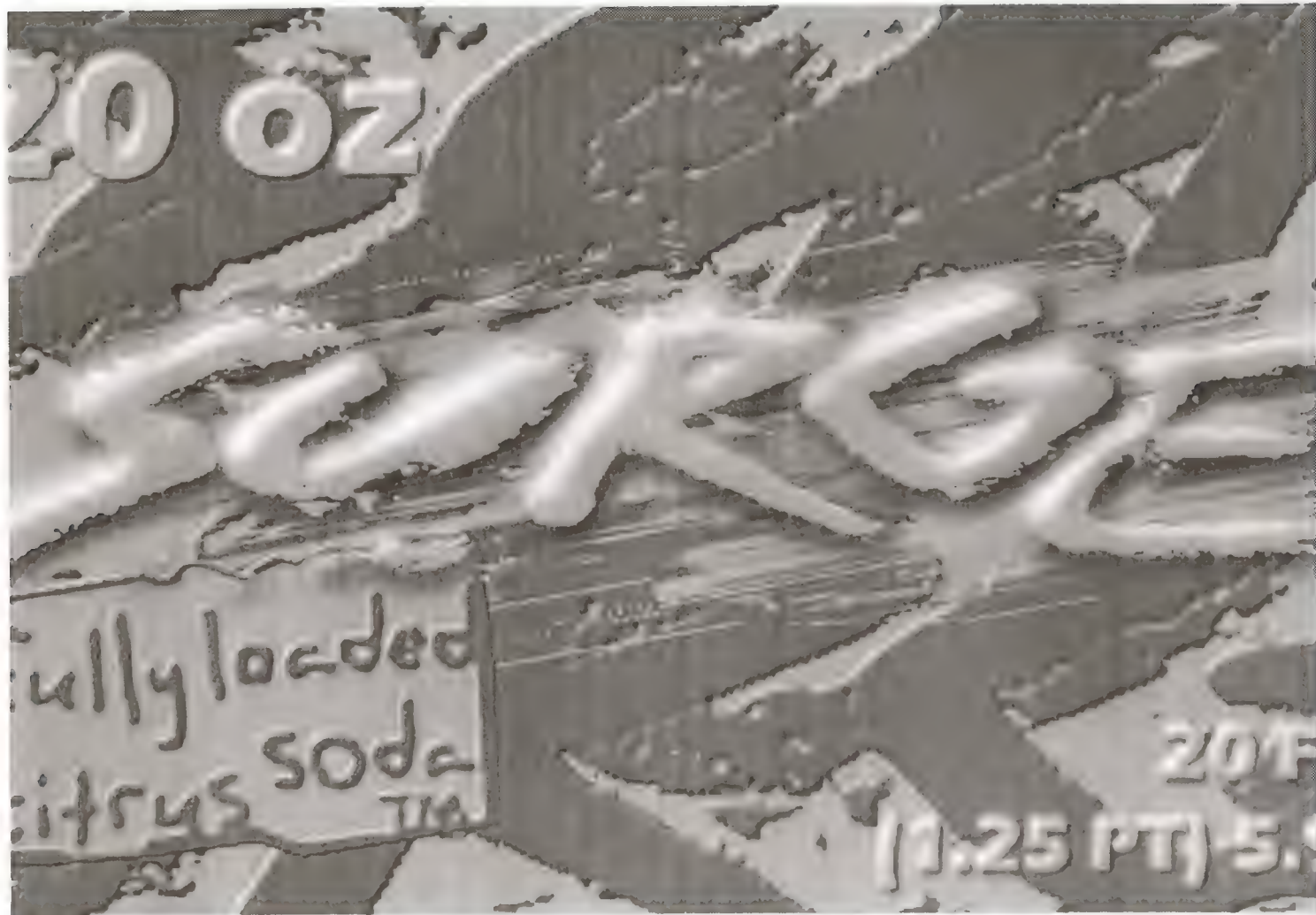
Starred for Life



Selection of Merit

*Chad
Raymond*

Surge



Selection of Merit

*Mary
Schoen*

My Dream Home



Selection of Merit

*Mary
Schoen*

An Organized Mess





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